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The theology of prayer



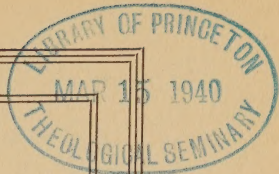






THE THEOLOGY OF PRAYER





# THE Theology of Prayer

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This work is respectfully dedicated  
to His Excellency,  
Thomas M. O'Leary, D.D.  
Bishop of Springfield





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## INTRODUCTION

This book constitutes an attempt to bring to the readers of the English language what the great scholastic theologians have taught about the nature of Christian prayer. The rather formidable Latin tomes of Thomas a Vallgornera, Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, Francis Sylvius, and Antoine Le Gaudier, to mention only four of them, contain treasures of doctrine on prayer so precious that it would be unfortunate if the people of God were to be deprived of them. These great scholastic theologians of prayer availed themselves of all the official pronouncements of the Church, and all the invaluable and vast resources of the teachers who had preceded them in the Church of God, and then expressed that living Catholic teaching with scientific accuracy and clarity. They were not concerned with any idle curiosity, with any mere drawing up of opinions or theories. The task which they set out to accomplish, and which they succeeded in accomplishing, was the statement of what God has revealed about prayer and what the Catholic Church proposes as having been revealed by God.

That teaching is obviously too good and too valuable not to transmit to the people of God. It was meant for them, and they cannot help but be benefited by it. The teaching of these great scholastics can help to increase the fervor and the intensity of the prayer of those who profit by it. These men show that prayer is a petition, the expression of a desire, ordered by God for the attainment

of certain definite and necessary goods; an act which by its very nature gives God the reverence and worship which are due to Him because of His supreme excellence. They explain that this petition is meant to be composed of four parts. The person who prays is supposed to realize the cause which makes the granting of our petitions by God possible. He is meant to arrive at an appreciation of God, as the One to whom prayer is offered, and as the One whom we wish to possess forever in the ineffable glory of the beatific vision. He is meant to express his gratitude to God for the various favors he has received from the divine bounty. These acts, taken with the actual statement of the desire which we wish to have fulfilled by God, constitute the complete prayer, the petition of fitting things from God.

On the basis of this scientifically exact teaching about the nature and the composition of prayer, these scholastic theologians have been able to put forward an invaluable presentation of the properties and the direction of prayer. They have analyzed the definition of prayer, not in function of useless hypotheses, but in the light of the teaching of our Lord Himself, as that teaching is proposed to us by the Catholic Church. They have brought out the meaning of the necessity of prayer, its causality and its character of worship in a way which can never be imitated by those who have not availed themselves of the doctrinal resources which these theologians have utilized. Most important of all, however, these scholastic theologians have brought out the inherent unity of all the Catholic teaching on prayer. They have shown clearly that meditation, and all the other exercises of mental prayer cannot be understood properly except insofar as they are thought of as belonging to, and contributing to

the perfection of the prayer of petition. The vagueness and impracticality which vitiate too many presentations of meditation in Christian literature vanish entirely in the light of this scientific Catholic teaching.

Although the Catholic literature of the English language is comparatively rich in treatises on prayer, this particular aspect of the subject, or to be more exact, this fundamental scientific teaching on prayer, is not as yet adequately available to our fellow countrymen. Most of the worth-while volumes on prayer which are at the disposition of our readers deal with methods of prayer, or with the characteristics of the various stages of mental prayer. Others are predominantly exhortations to prayer, some of which, being emotional or sentimental in content, are of little objective value. At any rate, the field which this volume sets out to cover is comparatively untouched. The present volume is not meant to replace or to duplicate any book in the English language.

What this book contains, and what it is important that Catholics of our time should have, is the actual doctrine of these scholastic theologians. Their own books are heavy with erudition. They cite and evaluate the statements of their fellow workers, they delve into the statements of the Fathers, in order ultimately to present an exact teaching on prayer. That teaching is presented in these pages, without the eruditional apparatus by which it was perfected.

The order of the chapters in this book follows that of the articles in the eighty-third question in the *secunda secundae* of St. Thomas' *Summa Theologica*. Consonant with the express teaching of the Holy Father in the encyclical *Studiorum Ducem*, that we should follow the doctrine of St. Thomas in the matter of ascetical and



mystical theology, this book contains the principles and the explanations of the Angelic Doctor on prayer. That teaching is expressed as it is found in the works of St. Thomas, and of his authentic and qualified exponents, for Sylvius, Vallgornera, and Joseph a Spiritu Sancto were men who applied themselves to the adequate statement of his doctrine.

The matter of this volume has been given, in lecture form, in the course of ascetical theology at St. Bernard's Seminary, in Rochester, New York, and in classes on the spiritual life at the Catholic University of America. The preparation of the book has been facilitated by the kindness and the co-operation of the author's fellow workers at both these institutions. The author wishes to thank particularly Father Joseph LaRue, the Procurator, Dr. John K. Ryan, of the Faculty of Philosophy, Dr. Francis Mullin, the Director of the Library, Drs. O'Brien, Parente, and Quasten of the Faculty of Sacred Theology, Drs. Sheehy and Russell of the Department of Religious Education, in the University, and Monsignors John F. Goggin and Joseph Grady of St. Bernard's.

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THE THEOLOGY OF PRAYER



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## CHAPTER I

### THE TWO DEFINITIONS

A. There are two proper definitions of prayer, both of which are useful in the study of prayer.

B. The statement that prayer is essentially a petition of fitting things from God is a proper theological conclusion.

C. As a petition, prayer is composed of four integral parts.

D. The first of these parts, obsecration, is the statement of the cause which makes the granting of the petition reasonable.

E. The second part, oration, is the practical consideration of God as the One to whom the petition is addressed.

F. This consideration is elaborated in the mental prayer of meditation.

G. The third part, the postulation, is the statement of our desire to God in order that He may grant us what we wish.

H. The fourth part, thanksgiving, consists in showing God a practical appreciation for the gifts which He has bestowed upon us.

I. Thanksgiving disposes a man to receive the gifts he asks of God in prayer.

J. It is the act into which the prayer of petition is ultimately resolved, and as such it constitutes the eternal prayer of heaven.

K. Each of these four parts is properly designated as a raising of the mind to God.



✘ A. Centuries ago St. John Damascene wrote that "prayer is the raising of the mind to God, or the petition of fitting things from God."<sup>1</sup>\* As the years have gone by Catholic theology has found in these words two perfect

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\* Footnotes on pp. 243-250.

and authentic definitions of prayer. They are definitions which, if used properly, can help man to understand what God has revealed and what the Church teaches about prayer. To use these definitions properly means to acknowledge them as they are proposed in the traditional Catholic theology. This science, expressing the teaching of the Catholic Church, tells us that these two definitions do not manifest the nature of prayer in the same way at all. They are not definitions of prayer on an equal footing. The first is called the definition of prayer in the broad, the second in the strict sense.<sup>2</sup> The first tells us about prayer in general. The second is the statement of the specific essence of prayer, that by which prayer is what it is, and is distinct from everything else.

With reference to the second definition, it is Catholic teaching that all of those acts, and only those acts which are petitions of fitting things from God, can properly be designated by the name of prayer. The first definition helps us to a very accurate understanding of prayer. A petition is naturally a complex<sup>3</sup> thing, a process made up of certain parts. These parts, which can compose an entire petition, are of such a nature that each one of them may properly be designated as a raising of the mind to God.<sup>4</sup> A raising of the mind to God is really a consideration of Him by the human intelligence. The petition as a whole is, as we shall see, an act of the human intelligence, and consequently a kind of consideration about God. Prayer, then, is a specific kind of raising of the mind to God, and at the same time it is composed of certain parts, each one of which is properly, though generally, designated as a consideration about God Himself. The meaning of that general designation is important. As Joseph a Spiritu Sancto remarks quite justly, not every

raising of the mind to God constitutes a prayer,<sup>5</sup> but only that which is done with reference to a petition to Him for things which are fitting.

✠ B. The standard theologians state the teaching of Catholic tradition and of Scripture when they tell us that prayer is essentially the petition of fitting things from God. When prayer is mentioned in the Old Testament, it is spoken of in terms of a plea made to God by those who hoped in Him.<sup>6</sup> When our Lord prayed, and when the words of those prayers were revealed to us, they were words of petition.<sup>7</sup> Teaching His Apostles to pray, He gave them the seven petitions which make up the ineffable beauty of the Our Father.<sup>8</sup> The earliest treatises on prayer, from the time of Tertullian and Origen, deal with prayer in function of petition. And the very liturgy of the Church, in the prayers which it enjoins upon the people of God, manifests the character of prayer as petition. The theologians, in thus interpreting the words of St. John Damascene, have added nothing to the teaching of Catholic tradition.

As a result it is definitely untheological to search about for a specific definition of prayer apart and distinct from the one which the voice of tradition brings to us. The statement that prayer is essentially and specifically a petition of fitting things from God is an integral part of the Catholic doctrine on prayer itself, and we have no more right to reject this than to attempt to reject or confuse any other item. Tampering with this definition, or attempting to explain it away, brings serious disadvantages. The teaching on prayer in Catholic theology is eminently a practical affair. As a result the standard definition of prayer in the strict sense is a thing of tremendous practical consequences. The neglect of this teaching can only



result in confusion and misunderstanding of prayer itself, and in a lessening of the advantages which a man is supposed to derive from the practice of prayer.

Practically, the fact that this definition is correct means that there is no such thing as a prayer of love or adoration distinct from and independent of the prayer of petition. It means that in prayer the soul is expected to address itself to God in the character and in the manner of a suppliant. There are, of course, acts of adoration and acts of love of God which are not the same as prayers. As a matter of fact, prayer is something which is meant to be motivated by love, and which can, in its turn, be aided, and to a certain extent manifested in adoration. But each of these acts has its proper place in the scheme of the supernatural order. The science of Catholic theology is rich enough to bring us an objective and detailed explanation of each of them. But all of the order and the beauty of this theological teaching are lost when these distinct acts are confused. There is a definite doctrine on prayer in itself, but all the force of that teaching is lost when prayer is looked upon as a sort of amalgam, and the definition of prayer in the strict sense is considered as applying to one rather obscure department of prayer, rather than as expressing the nature of the act itself. The neglect of the essential definition of prayer brings with it the grave danger of reducing all the doctrine on this definite act to a series of generalizations and platitudes.

✠ C. However, in the traditional presentation of prayer in Catholic theology, the essential and specific definition of prayer is not meant to be used by itself. It is perfectly expressive of the nature of prayer insofar as it is used with the general definition. For prayer, as a petition, is

by its very nature an act which can be composed. The parts which enter into the composition of prayer are acts of tremendous importance in the life of the individual Christian. And these acts are nothing more or less than certain considerations about God, certain definite raisings of the mind to God in the order of petition. Naturally they are acts which cannot be understood or described properly except insofar as they are seen as parts of a petition, as composing a process which is essentially and specifically a prayer.

St. Thomas Aquinas, and the theologians who follow his teaching, tell us that there are four of these acts which are called the parts of prayer. They are the obsecration, the oration, the postulation, and the thanksgiving.<sup>9</sup> Not every petition which is offered to God for fitting things is actually composed of all four of these integral parts. An ejaculation, for instance, is a perfect prayer, and it is used precisely because of its simplicity. But a prayer is essentially something which can be made up of these parts, and prayers like the Collects of the Mass, and the prayers of the ritual, actually are composed of these integrating elements. One of these parts in particular, the oration, can in the case of private prayer be extended so as to constitute the exercise of meditation or the favor of contemplation.

✠ D. The first of these parts is the obsecration.<sup>10</sup> It is the act in which the one petitioning recognizes the reason why prayer can be answered. Prayer is a petition made to God for fitting things. These fitting things are, of course, the gift of eternal life, and all of those favors which, in the designs of God's providence, are ordered to the attainment of that life. Now all of these gifts are things which have been procured and merited for us by

our Lord. There is nothing which we ask from God in prayer, and nothing which we can ever obtain by way of prayer, which has not been earned for us by Christ. Consequently the motive of prayer, in the sense that it is the reason alleged for the obtaining of the good for which we ask God in prayer, can be nothing apart from the passion of Christ Himself.

If we wish to trace this reason back as far as we can, we shall see that the very incarnation of the Son of God was something destined from all eternity. It was a work which was ordered by God, not due to us out of any justice, but because of His infinite mercy and goodness. In the official prayers of the Catholic Church the obsecration takes the form of the conclusion, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God forever," or a similar formula. In the solemn litanies the obsecration is well marked. We ask God to free us from all the evils which threaten us through all the mysteries of His sacred humanity. We ask this through the mystery of His holy Incarnation, through His coming, His birth and baptism, and all the mysteries which led up to, and culminated in, the passion and death of Christ.

This obsecration belongs to prayer by the very fact that prayer is essentially a petition. Petitions are acts with which we are quite familiar in this world. A petition is a plea made to a superior for some favor. While the petition may well take the form of a simple expression of a desire, it may also take the form of an ordered and reasoned discourse. The politician who seeks an elective office makes a petition to his electorate, and it would be something more than sensational if an office seeker were to content himself with the simple formula, "I would

like to have you give me this office." It is only natural that man, making a reasonable request, should point out the element which makes that request reasonable and renders the granting of it possible and good. That is the function of the obsecration.

✠ E. The second of these parts is the raising of the mind to God in the order of prayer.<sup>11</sup> In this part the soul addresses itself to God. Obviously it is impossible to make an appeal to God in prayer without thinking about Him. That thought about God in which we consider Him as the One to whom we pray may well be implicit in the prayer itself, as in the case of an ejaculation. But, in the liturgical prayers of the Church, in the beautifully articulated petitions of the litanies, and in private prayer that consideration can be made explicitly, as a distinct and important part of the process of petition. This part is the oration, the second among the integral parts of prayer.

This part differs from the obsecration in that it is an appreciative consideration of God insofar as He is the One to whom we pray. The obsecration, on the other hand, is the recognition of the fact upon which the reasonableness of our prayer is based. In the second part of prayer we raise our minds to God in order to arrive at this consideration. We pray to God insofar as He is infinitely blessed, and is willing and able to communicate a partaking of His life to us. We seek our eternal beatitude, and we must bring ourselves to realize that we can only obtain this from the One who is eternal life. In praying to God, then, we think of Him as blessed, and as the One who is able and willing to concede to us the beatitude which we desire.<sup>12</sup>

This consideration is in itself a rather simple thing.

But it is not the nature of the human mind to obtain an appreciative understanding of things all at once, and from the very beginning. Because the human mind sees truth as it were piecemeal, we obtain this appreciative consideration of God in a great many acts. The goodness and the blessedness of God to whom we address our petitions is so great that we utilize all the terms of the liturgical prayers and find them expressing the profundity of this knowledge correctly but inadequately. In the Collects we call out to the "Almighty and Eternal God." In the Lord's Prayer, the form and model of all the Christian petition, and in the litanies, we think of our Father in Heaven. So rich and complex is this oration which is an integral part of prayer that the Catholic Church shows us, in her approved forms of meditation, only a sketch of its content.

✠ F. This consideration of God is so important, and at the same time so profound, that, in the practice of the Christian life, there is marked an exercise which is meant to set out that content clearly and distinctly. Thus the teaching about meditation, and the approved methods of making a meditation, give us the best treatment we could wish about the content and the nature of this oration. Conversely, of course, the exercise of meditation, and all the acts which go into its preparation and perfection are to be understood in their proper place in the economy of prayer itself. Meditation is an exercise which is integrated into the fabric of prayer. It is a part of the petition which we make to God for the things that are fitting.

The oration is a consideration of God as the One to whom we pray. As a result it is a practical consideration. We raise our minds to Him as to the One who is to communicate to us the beatitude which we desire. We think



of Him then as the One to whom we tend. Ours is a consideration which is ordered to something. It is a consideration which has reference to our own activity. In the ordered complexity of meditation it terminates in the resolution which we take to avoid some particular obstacle, or to practice some particular virtue in some definite circumstance.

Again, this is fittingly a part of the petition which is prayer. Because of the very nature of the human mind, it is only fitting that man should explain the connection between the object which we seek, and the person from whom he seeks it. Thus, in the field of politics, it does the petitioner no great harm to explain, even at some length, that he really wishes the thing that the people intend to give. He must show that he wills to accept the responsibilities of the office to which he aspires, rather than merely the benefits which this office would confer upon him. This explanatory address, in which the person to whom the petition is made is addressed precisely as the one who has the benefit to confer, is and should be an integral part of any human petition.

¶ G. The third among the integral parts of prayer is the postulation.<sup>13</sup> This consists in the actual statement of the desire. Naturally it is the essential part of prayer. It is the act, to the perfection of which all the others are ordered. It is considered as a part of prayer insofar as it is expressed in distinct words as a part of the formula in which the petition as a whole is expressed. It is also a part because it does not express, within itself, the full perfection of that petition which is Christian prayer.

The postulation can be made in several ways. It is made directly when we ask God expressly for this gift.<sup>14</sup> It is made by insinuation, or indirectly, when we simply

state our need to God, without actually stating that we will the granting of our desires from Him. In this latter case the person intends to have God grant the favor which he needs. The indirect or insinuating petition differs from the other only insofar as it does not express this intention in so many words.

Any petition made by man sets forth the desire which man wishes to have fulfilled by the efforts of the superior to whom he addresses his petition. The speech of the politician would be altogether incomplete if he were to neglect to inform his audience exactly what he wanted of them. In the same way the petition which we address to God for the things which are fitting for us would be most incomplete were we to neglect to state exactly what we wish to have from God. The obsecration and the oration both contribute to the perfection of this postulation. The statement of the desire comes as a kind of conclusion to the steps which have gone before. This is the part of prayer in which the essence of the act is most perfectly realized.

✠ H. Finally, there is the thanksgiving, which comes as an integral part of the process of prayer.<sup>15</sup> We thank God when we show Him some practical appreciation for the favors which He has bestowed upon us. In giving thanks to God we use the gifts He has given us in the way in which He wishes us to use them. We use them to our own advantage, and make them contribute to His glory by making them further motives for loving Him with a true love of benevolence. This gratitude is due to God, not only for the gifts which He has given us in answer to previous prayer, but for those things which He has bestowed upon us independently of any petition on our part. We are properly grateful to God in the measure

that we utilize these gifts for His honor and glory, when we serve Him with them and love Him because of them.

✠ I. The act of thanksgiving has two functions to fulfill in the process of prayer. First it does a work quite similar to that of the obsecration. The obsecration comprises the recognition of the reason because of which the petitions we make to God can be granted. There is an ultimate reason, and that is the mercy of God, as manifest and effective in the incarnation and the redemption. But there is also a certain reason on our part. That reason is no merit or worth of ours. We ask for favors, for things which are not due to us in any title of justice, at least not insofar as they are looked upon in the economy of prayer. The reason is a condition on our part by which we are in a certain way disposed and fit to receive favors from God in answer to the petitions we make to Him. That condition is gratitude.<sup>16</sup>

Gratitude disposes us to receive God's gifts in response to prayer because of the very purpose for which God grants His favors to creatures. The gifts which He grants to us are all meant to contribute to the attainment of our eternal and supernatural salvation. There is no other ultimate end open to the endeavors of man. As we have seen, gratitude or thanksgiving is the disposition in which man gives practical recognition of these benefits in the sense that he intends to use them for the honor and glory of God and for the attainment of his own salvation. If he were not grateful in this sense, he would not be disposed to receive these gifts of God. The gifts would not be of any benefit to him were they not to be utilized for the attainment of heaven.

In this way, of course, thanksgiving is a necessary part of prayer. It is not requisite that it should be stated ex-

pressly in words which form an integral part of the formula in which the petition of prayer is contained. But it is requisite as a disposition, and it is fitting that mention should be made of this disposition in the words of the petition. As a matter of fact the Collects of the Church express this gratitude of the people of God often. Time and time again there is mention of the fact that God has been good to His people. This recognition is, as we have seen, meant to be practical. It is meant to influence the performance of acts which have to do with these gifts which God has given.

In methodical mental prayer there is obviously room for recognition of these benefits. In most of the current and approved methods of meditation there is express mention of thanksgiving, an effort to make this gratitude more intense by reflecting scientifically upon the goodness of God in conceding these gifts to us.<sup>17</sup>

¶ J. There is, however, a second function of thanksgiving, as it enters into the integrity of mental prayer. It is the act into which the prayer of this world will ultimately be resolved. In this life prayer is a petition, the expression of a desire for gifts which we have not, but which we wish to possess. Thus prayer is the expression of a certain want within our lives. The prayer even of the highest saints in heaven is a petition now, because, as long as there are men upon this earth, the saints in heaven will wish to have those men receive helps and graces in order that they may be their fellows in the ineffable glory of heaven.

But there will come a time when the number of the saints will be filled. There will be nothing lacking in the perfection of those who actually are the children of God. No one will be able to petition for the happiness of



heaven, because all of those who are capable of it will actually enjoy it, and possess it in such a way that they will never be able to lose it again. There will be no need to ask for anything as requisite for the attainment of heaven. And the saints themselves will have nothing to petition for, since there will be nothing lacking to those who are capable of heaven. Those who will not actually be in possession of the beatific vision will be only those who are forever incapable of enjoying it, or of wishing for it.

In these circumstances, after the general judgment, the petition which has been the voice and the power of the children of God through the ages will resolve itself into an eternal hymn of praise and thanksgiving.<sup>18</sup> That thanksgiving will be the continuation of the act which is an integral part of the process of prayer as that process exists in this world. It will consist in an eternal willingness to utilize the favors which God has bestowed upon the elect for His honor and glory. It will be a disposition to utilize those gifts as motives for loving God forever. Charity is eternal, and the gratitude which enters into the composition of prayer is and will be a disposition for, and manifestation of, this unending love of God.

Gratitude, too, is a part of any petition by the very fact that it is a petition. No one could reasonably make a petition to a superior without in some way manifesting gratitude for the favors which that superior has already granted to him. He would not be disposed to receive any favor from the superior unless he were willing to utilize that favor in the interests of the one from whom he asked it. And, by the very fact that he has made the petition, there will exist a certain relation on his part to the gift which he has received, and a reference to the one from



whom he received it. That relation begins in the process of the petition itself. He first attains this object as something which he desires to obtain from this superior. But ever afterwards, as long as that favor endures, it will be something which he has received from the superior, and something which he is bound to use to the advantage of the one from whom he received it. In this way the favor of the beatific vision will always have been a favor which we have received from God by reason of prayer, and so it will be a gift which we utilize for the glory and the love of God.

✠ K. These four, obsecration, oration, postulation, and thanksgiving, are the parts which go to make up the complete and perfect act of prayer. They enter into every act which is truly a prayer, and at certain times, in the performance of mental prayer, they are severally considered distinctly and explicitly. Each of these is an act in which the mind is lifted up to God. Each of these acts is a certain practical consideration of God. But each of these acts is itself ordered to the whole of which they are all parts. The act of prayer as such is essentially a petition of fitting things from God. The petition becomes more perfect insofar as we have become more perfectly and practically cognizant of God in the line of these four acts. And each of these achieves its end insofar as it contributes to the perfection of the prayer as a whole.

There are other definitions of prayer more general still. One of them, which sums up the characteristics of most of the others is "a familiar speaking to God."<sup>19</sup> In the act of prayer we do actually speak to God, but we address Him and approach Him in our quality as suppliants. We must not allow ourselves to imagine that we can speak to Him as His equals. We give practical testi-

mony to our dependence upon God when we petition Him for the favors which we desire to have from Him. Thus, not every speech could have the character of prayer, but only that in which we tell Him what we wish to have from Him in such a way that He will actually give this favor to us. The fact that prayer is a petition to God for fitting things, taught as it is in the authentic tradition of Catholic doctrine, has its influence upon every section of the teaching on prayer.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE FACULTY OF PRAYER

A. Prayer is an act of the intelligence rather than of the will.

B. It is an act of the practical intelligence.

C. A petition differs from the other acts of the practical intelligence in that it is addressed to a superior in order that its effect may be procured through the activity of that superior.

D. Prayer is characteristically definite, having a definite effect upon our own activity and ordering that activity in the direction of the effect it seeks from God.

E. As a petition, prayer is an act of the intelligence moved by the will, in the sense that the good which prayer seeks is something which the will really desires.

F. This desire is immediately the act of Christian hope.

G. This act of the will is meant to be sincere and efficacious.

H. The good sought in prayer is something difficult of attainment because it is ultimately supernatural.

I. It is also difficult because of the weakness of human nature consequent upon original sin.

J. This good is possible of attainment by reason of the mercy of God, as manifest in the passion of Christ.

K. The act of hope, expressed in prayer, is meant to be accompanied by a salutary fear.

L. While a man who is not in the state of grace can pray, the hope which motivates prayer is meant to be informed by charity.



✕ A. After we have seen what Catholic doctrine tells us about the definition of prayer, we are able to go on to an analysis of that definition. Prayer is, as we have seen, the petition of fitting things from God. Then it

follows that there are certain things true about prayer precisely because it is a petition. A definition is a means for learning about the thing of which it is the definition. We utilize it as such when we look into the implications of the terms which go to make it up.

The basic implication of the fact that prayer is a petition is the classification of prayer as an act of the practical intellect.<sup>1</sup> Because it is a petition, prayer is something essentially distinct from an act of an appetitive faculty like the will. It is in a category altogether different from that which contains acts like hope and love and devotion. But, while it is not an act of the will, it proceeds from the intelligence insofar as this faculty is moved and determined by the will. The good which man seeks from God in prayer is the object of his will. And it is because he wills it that he makes this petition to God.

When we say that prayer, because it is a petition, cannot be an act of the will, we mean that it is not an appetitive act. An act of an appetitive faculty is a tendency toward some good which is known, and an act of the will is basically a tendency toward some good which is seen as such in the human intelligence. We love or desire something which we see as good, and we hate and abhor something which is seen as destructive of or harmful to our own good. Prayer is not classified as an act of this sort. As a result none of the characteristics which follow upon affective acts belong properly to prayer.

✠ B. When we say that prayer is an act of the practical intelligence, we distinguish it from those intellectual acts which are termed speculative. An act of the intellect is called speculative when it is worth while for its own sake. The human mind is made to act, and this operation constitutes its very purpose and perfection. Natu-

rally, then, there are certain operations of the mind which are good in themselves, and which need not be referred to any further purpose. In the natural order the knowledge included in sciences like metaphysics or astronomy is speculative. It is good for man to have this knowledge apart altogether from any reference of this activity to other operations which man might perform because of it. There is a certain perfection for the intelligence of man in the very possession of speculative knowledge.

The work of the practical intelligence, on the other hand, is essentially ordained to the obtaining of a good distinct from itself. Practical knowledge is definitely not worth while for its own sake. It is something which is sought and obtained for the sake of something else. Practical knowledge, or to be more exact, the operation of the practical intelligence is causative. It orders a certain effect to be produced by the activity of certain proper agents. Because prayer is essentially a petition, it is classified among the operations of the practical intellect. For this reason the activity of prayer is essentially causative. It has reference to an effect to be produced, to the obtaining of a good distinct from itself.

✠ C. The most general classification under which prayer can be listed is thus as an operation of the practical intelligence or reason. But there are elements by which petition is essentially distinguished from any other activity within the competence even of the practical intelligence. First of all a petition is an act in which an effect is disposed to be procured through the activity of another. Naturally not all the acts of the practical reason are so constituted. It is possible for man to order some effect to be produced by his own activity. Man is able



to plan, disposing an effect to be procured by his own work and the exercise of his own faculties. But man is also able, even in the purely natural order of things, to dispose an effect to be produced by the activity of another. When this other is one who is subject to him, he obtains the effect by the exercise of an act of the practical intelligence which is called a command. In this way a general obtains a victory, through the issuance of orders to his forces. When the other person is not subject to him, but at the same time is not constituted as his superior, he obtains his effect by means of a request. But when the person through whose power his effect is to be produced is his superior, the act of the practical reason by which this effect is procured is properly termed a petition.

✠ D. Since a petition is essentially an act of the practical intelligence, it must be endowed with that quality which is characteristic of practical acts, it must be definite. An act of the practical intelligence is ordered to obtain a definite object. In the obtaining of that object it brings into play a definite and determined set of means. In its speculative function, the intelligence regards the universal aspects of its object, prescindng from its individuating characteristics. But an act is practical in the measure in which it is concerned with a particular object which is to be attained.

Naturally this has tremendous repercussions in the field of prayer. Since prayer is a petition by its very essence, it is clothed with all the essential characteristics of a plan. Prayer sets out to achieve a certain definite end. It plans this end as something to be achieved by the action of a definite superior, God Himself. God is in no wise an instrument of the man who prays. As a matter

of fact, as we shall see, exactly the opposite is the truth. But prayer is ordered to the attainment of a certain good, a determined good which God Himself wills to give to man in answer to prayer.

The fitting things which are to be obtained through prayer, and for which prayer is essentially the petition, comprise the glory of God, to be achieved in the eternal vision of God in heaven, and all of the goods which are ordered to this end in the designs of God's providence. The good for which we ask, and which we shall not obtain if we fail to ask for it, is a good to which life itself is ordered. Prayer is a kind of plan to obtain this good which God wills us to have. It is a plan strong enough and important enough to be manifested to God in order that it may be fulfilled by His power. As a result it is a plan which should govern and direct the rest of our activity. That activity is meant to be a means requisite in the attaining of the object for which we petition God in prayer. Then the same plan or petition which is directed to the attaining of the object, which is eternal life, must also be directed to the performance of that activity without which the eternal life will not be obtained.

Naturally our own activity is particular and definite. The plan, which is prayer, must look to that activity in this definite way. A general does not plan a victory merely by ordering in an indefinite way that his troops should defeat the enemy. The plan is valuable in the measure in which it is detailed and definite. An architect does not plan a building merely by decreeing that a roof should be placed over walls. The petition of prayer likewise involves an effective ordering of all the resources at our command for the attainment of the object sought in prayer. A plan to obtain eternal life by the power of

God would be stultified by the presence of a counter-determination to perform activity incompatible with the obtaining of this end. As a plan prayer must be all embracing and definite.

The petition of prayer, then, demands a plan to possess an eternal life which is to be consequent upon definite virtuous activity. The same plan which orders the obtaining of this end, orders and determines the performance of definite virtuous acts under certain definite conditions which are actually met in the course of our lives. The same plan involves the overcoming of the definite temptations which we know will come in our way. The petition for eternal life involves a plan for an increase in the perfection of our own Christian lives here on earth. That plan, too, must be detailed, definite, and effective.

✠ E. There is another feature of prayer which helps us to understand it. Because it is a petition, prayer is an act of the intelligence moved by the will. In other words the object sought in prayer is something which man desires. The thing which prayer seeks to bring us, and for which it is meant to be an effective plan, is a good which our will desires.

Naturally a man only plans to obtain a certain object insofar as he really wants to have it. Thus the object of the act of practical intelligence is determined by the will. In the act of the speculative reason the case is entirely different. The will can move the speculative intelligence to act. It can influence the mind to consider this object rather than that. But in the actual obtaining of the object, the will has no part in the function of the speculative reason. A man may think of arithmetic because he wishes to do so. But the reason why he states that two

plus two equals four is a reason altogether divorced from the will. But the will determines the very object of the practical intelligence.

The object which we seek ultimately in prayer is the glory of God, to be obtained in our eternal enjoyment of the beatific vision. This is the object of the petition of prayer. By that very fact, then, it is the object of a certain act of the will, an act which motivates and inspires prayer. We would not petition this object unless we truly willed it, and, the measure of the petition we make to God is the intensity of the act by which we actually will this object. God wishes us to pray for the goods which are properly the object of prayer in the measure in which we actually will them.

✠ F. Catholic theology tells us very clearly the nature of those voluntary acts by which we tend toward the goods we seek from God in prayer. According to the teaching of St. Thomas contained in that unfinished masterpiece, the *Compendium Theologiae*,<sup>2</sup> prayer is manifestive of hope. The good which we seek from God in prayer, the good which is the object of our petition to God is the thing for which we hope; the object which we are confident that God is able and willing to give to us.

We can understand the implications of this teaching as we see something of the teaching of theology about the nature of hope itself. First of all hope is a kind of love. It is an act by which we tend toward a thing insofar as it is seen as good by the intelligence. It is a love which seeks this object as our own good. It is inexact to call this a selfish love, because selfishness inevitably carries the implication of a disordered and improper love of ourselves. In hope we seek a good as our own good, but it is precisely that which God Himself has commanded us to



seek. It is the good which He has established as the only ultimate good of man. It is the object, in the possession of which man is to find the only ultimate beatitude which is open to him.

✠ G. The act of hope is a tendency to a good which is not as yet acquired. A man obviously does not petition for a favor which he already enjoys. As such, hope is a kind of desire, a tendency toward an absent good, and this act of desire must of its very nature be sincere and efficacious. In this way it is distinguished from a mere velleity. This latter is a mere approving act of the will, divorced from any influence upon reality. It is a velleity if I say that I would like to take a vacation in Europe. I would approve such a relaxation absolutely. It is an appealing prospect. But I have not the slightest intention of taking such a journey. On the other hand, I have a real desire to conduct my class tomorrow. This is an absent good, but I have every intention of procuring it. Consequently I shall take advantage of all the resources at my command for the attainment of this end.

There are tremendous implications contained in the truth that prayer as a petition is the expression of a desire. Prayer is the expression of an act of the will in which we actually intend to possess this good which God has reserved for us. The act of the will which inspires prayer is supposed to be an act which is serious enough and strong enough to motivate the rest of our activity with regard to this end. It would be idle for us to tell God that we desire to have the beatific vision while we really do not intend to work for it at all. When we pray to God, we tell Him that we actually intend to possess Him in the eternal glory of the beatific vision. An intention becomes a mere velleity when it is accompanied with an



efficacious desire of things incompatible with the attaining of the end for which it is destined. No one would take seriously the statement of a man who says he intends to do his work while at the same time he is engaged in some sort of activity which renders the proper performance of his task impossible. The same truth holds in the case of a man who refuses to avail himself of the means which are obviously required for the proper conduct of his work. It would be ridiculous for a man to state that he wished to lecture well in class, while he steadfastly failed to study and to prepare his lectures.

In the matter of prayer, we are engaged with the petition for a good which is to be had by way of merit. In prayer we tell God that we desire a good which is to be earned only by supernatural and virtuous activity in this world. If we are unwilling to practice this activity, if we choose to perform works which are destructive of the life of grace which God has given to us, our desire is only a sham. Naturally, then, it is imperative for a person who is engaged in the business of prayer to examine himself, and to see to it that he actually desires the good for which he petitions, in the way in which that good is offered to him, and in which it is to be the object of prayer. Prayer is meant to manifest to God a willingness to do what God wills in order to have the good which we seek from Him in the petition of prayer.

However, the act of the will which is immediately manifest in prayer is something more than desire. It is hope. Desire is a real and sincere tendency toward an absent good, in the sense that a man really wills to possess it. But desire is something which prescind from any condition which might be attached to the attainment of its object. It takes no account of difficulty. Hope, on the

other hand, is a tendency precisely toward some good which is seen as difficult yet possible of attainment. The condition of difficulty differentiates the object of hope from that of mere desire, and the possibility of the attainment of that object makes hope essentially contrary to despair. When we pray to God we ask for a good for which we really hope, for a good which is seen as difficult of attainment, and as possible for us to possess. That complex good is eternal life, to be possessed as something merited by activity performed in the life of sanctifying grace, a life which is meant to increase in perfection throughout the course of our lives in this world.

✠ H. There are two reasons which make this object something difficult of attainment, and consequently the matter of hope rather than of mere desire. The first is the fact that this good is supernatural by its very essence. The second is that human nature has been so weakened by original sin that a distinct help from God is requisite for man in order that he may perform all the acts which enter into the fabric of a good life.

The first reason is, of course, basic. When we say that the good which we ask of God in prayer is supernatural, we mean that the object which we seek primarily, and by reason of which we ask for everything else that can be petitioned in prayer, is something which is beyond the natural powers and the natural right, not only of man, but of any creature, actual or possible. That object is, of course, the possession of God in the eternal clarity of the beatific vision.

Every creature is made for its own activity. The immediate reason why man is existent at all is, of course, man's own operation. There is a certain end which could be obtained in that operation which belongs to man as

man. In the attainment of that end man would find his natural happiness. That end would consist in the operation of his intelligence, and the natural happiness of man would consist in that sort of cultural knowledge in which he would satisfy every natural craving for knowledge which belongs to him. That knowledge would resolve itself into a recognition of God, the First Cause of the universe. It would be a great good, a good proportioned to the magnificent resources of human nature itself.

However, it has pleased God in His mercy to ordain man for a kind of happiness which is utterly beyond the unaided forces of his own nature. God wills that we should not merely know Him as the First Cause of all created things, but that we should see Him face to face forever. That act is intellectual and vital. It is an act which belongs to a certain life, not the life of human nature, but to the life of an adopted child of God. Habitual or sanctifying grace is the principle of that life within the human soul. It is the quality within us, a quality given by God which makes us able connaturally to perform the acts of that life in which the beatific vision is integrated. It is a gift which God offers to us and gives us in this life. We are expected to live that life of habitual grace in this world in order that by death we may come to the fruition and perfection for which it is destined. The life of habitual grace in this world is meant to be a preparation for, and a growing to the fullness of that life in the next world. That life is thus one which belongs in heaven, and those who live it are in that sense pilgrims and travelers who have on this earth no lasting city, but journey here on their way to heaven.

In the merciful designs of God's providence it is de-

creed that this is the only ultimate happiness available to man. His life on this earth will always have been a success if by it he attains the beatific vision. Should he fail to attain this supernatural beatitude, his life will always have been a failure.

This end is essentially difficult for man in the sense that he could never attain it by his own unaided powers. The beatific vision, the life to which it belongs, and every least manifestation of that life is something which surpasses the powers, not only of one man, but of the entire human race, or for that matter of every creature which ever could exist. Perhaps an example will serve to throw this truth into a stronger focus. The television apparatus is a thing which is the resultant of the cumulative scientific knowledge of mankind for thousands of years. But all of the intellectual acumen of uncounted centuries could never result in man's knowing even of the existence of the beatific vision unless that knowledge had been communicated to him by God Himself. And obviously no effort of man which depended upon purely natural sources could ever result in bringing about the beatific vision for any person. Obviously, then, a good which man is utterly incapable of knowing or procuring by his unaided natural efforts is a thing of difficulty.

✠ I. There is another source of difficulty inherent in human nature as it actually exists, the harm which has been done to human nature by original sin. The sin of Adam was such as to injure not only himself but his descendants. All of those who come into this world by way of generation from Adam, with the exception of our Blessed Lady, who was exempted from this by the pre-applied merits of Christ, are deprived of the supernatural and preternatural gifts which God gave to Adam, and



which his descendants would have had from him had he remained faithful to God. They lack the gift of habitual grace, which they would have had from Adam, and at the same time they lack the immortality and the freedom from concupiscence which would have been theirs. There is a disequilibrium in the very nature of man. His lower nature, that is, his sense appetite, is not perfectly subject to the higher nature, the intelligence and the will. This lack of subordination of the senses to the spiritual faculties in man is something which man has as a penalty. The perfect subordination which Adam enjoyed was something not due to his nature, but the deprivation of that gift in a person who is still destined for a supernatural end constitutes a source of difficulty in his life. Man stands in need of a special and supernatural gift of God in order that he may fulfill the law of God in its entirety.

The attainment of the beatific vision involves a perseverance in the life of habitual grace, and consequently in virtuous activity, until the end of life. By reason of the weakness which comes from original sin, man will not persevere for any long time without special help from God, a help incidentally which is always offered to us. Then the object which we desire, and which we petition from God in prayer, is something distinctly difficult in this sense also. It is the object of hope rather than of simple desire.

✠ J. But this object is also something possible, something for which we hope. It is not the object of despair. For there is a force exercised in our behalf, a force which renders us able to procure the good for which we pray. Basically that force is the mercy of God. God is merciful insofar as He supplies the needs of His creatures and benefits them apart from any merit on their part. He has



decreed to give man the eternal and supernatural beatitude which man had lost in the sin of Adam through the passion of Jesus Christ. In the designs of His providence the passion of Christ is the cause by which this supernatural goal is still possible of attainment by men. And the benefits of our Lord's passion are communicated to men insofar as they are joined to Him in the unity of His body which is the Catholic Church. The supernatural life which is to fructify in the beatific vision in heaven is communicated to men insofar as they are members of that Church, sharing in its sacrifice and benefiting from its sacraments.

The fact that prayer is an expression of Christian hope has, of course, important implications for the life of prayer itself. Hope resolves itself into confidence in God. We rely upon His goodness and upon His power for the attainment of the end which we seek in prayer. The grace of God is always at our disposal, in the sense that at any time we can have, through prayer, the helps which God wills us to have for the attainment of our eternal destiny. But, while He will never fail us, it is perfectly possible for us to fail Him. Hope excludes both despair and presumption. The help which He holds out to us, and which we can always have in this life through the act of prayer is a help for the gaining of eternal life through the living of a virtuous life. It is not destined to bring us to this eternal beatitude apart from the living of the life of grace in this world. It is presumption on our part to deal with this help of God as if it were something independent of and separate from the progress in the spiritual life.

✠ K. In this way Christian hope is meant to be joined with a certain salutary fear. Fully aware of the fact that

we can fall away from God and show ourselves untrue to Him, we recoil from such a fall and from its consequences. The confidence which animates the prayer which is the interpreter of Christian hope is a confidence in God rather than in ourselves. We are expected to rely on God, and to fear any separation from Him. Naturally this salutary fear is utterly different from the slavish fear in which a man simply keeps away from sin in order to avoid the punishment which would come from that sin, at the same time retaining his affection for this offense against God. The prayer which we offer to God is meant to be expressive of the salutary fear. Slavish fear is not the expression of a desire for God at all — it is actually opposed to the virtue of hope as well as to charity.

✠ L. Finally, the act of the will which is manifested to God in the petition of Christian prayer is meant to be animated and informed by Christian charity. Naturally charity is not absolutely requisite for the performance of the act of prayer. Otherwise a man in the state of sin could never beg forgiveness from God in the act of prayer. And it happens that this sort of petition is a prayer in the most proper sense of the term. But even a prayer which is said by a man in the state of sin, a prayer for forgiveness is a petition in the direction of Christian charity. Forgiveness of sin implies the infusion of habitual grace, and this grace is actually inseparable from charity. Even in this way charity is meant to dominate the life of prayer.

But prayer is meant to be said by those who actually live the life of habitual grace. In these people the desire of Christian hope is motivated and informed by the love of God which is known as charity. There is no more dangerous error in all the doctrine of the spiritual life

than that which tends to separate the operation of hope from that of the queen of all the virtues. Hope is something distinct from charity, but the two virtues are not meant to be separated one from the other. Charity is more perfect than hope, but it is precisely the factor by which the act of hope is to be ordered and brought to its proper end. Charity is a love of friendship, a mutual love of benevolence for God, founded upon a common good which is nothing other than the participation of God's own nature in habitual grace. As a love of benevolence it is not a mere sentiment, but a real and efficacious will to render to God that which is pleasing to Him. The operation of charity consists, then, in the obedience to all the commandments, and implies the practice of the other Christian virtues.

This love of charity in this life involves and commands the act of Christian hope. As a love of benevolence for God, charity impels us to will for Him the glory and the honor which are rightfully His. It demands that we should strive for the eternal recognition of His beauty in the beatific vision. Charity, then, is meant to motivate and influence the acts of all the other Christian virtues. We live the life of habitual grace properly when we hope for the eternal possession of God because we love Him, and when our prayer is influenced ultimately by our charity.

Because the desire which prayer manifests to God is an act of hope, motivated by charity, the extent of the benefits which prayer can confer is measured by the extent of charity itself. As a love of benevolence for God, charity involves a love of benevolence for those who are called to be the adopted children of God and the fellow citizens of the saints forever. That love of benevolence is meant

to be sincere and efficacious. Willing to these men the one good which God offers to them, and which He wills them to have through our efforts, we cannot fail to place in operation the one force at our disposal by which these goods can be procured for those we love in God. That force is prayer. The standard which determines the beneficiaries of prayer, then, will necessarily be the norm of charity. We are to pray for those to whom we are bound in the ties of charity, and who are in a position to profit by our activity.

Moreover, the fact that prayer is something which is meant to be motivated by charity makes prayer an act which can be meritorious. When it is performed under the influence of charity prayer is an activity which earns the guerdon of eternal salvation as a reward which is due to it in justice. This is a manner of efficacy which is, of course, distinct from that which is proper to prayer, the causing of the good which we ask from God in prayer, and which we receive because we have petitioned Him for it.

Finally, prayer is meant to be the arm and the instrument of charity. Because we love God with this love of friendship which He has deigned to communicate to us, there are certain things which we desire. God wills that we should co-operate in bringing about those goods which we desire out of charity by expressing that desire to Him in the petition of prayer so that it may be fulfilled by His power.

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## CHAPTER III

### THE CAUSALITY OF PRAYER

A. Among the many ways in which prayer can produce an effect, there is one way which is proper to prayer, the way of impetration.

B. The causality of prayer is dependent upon the government of the world by God.

C. Prayer is a cause, seen and ordered as such, in the decrees of the divine providence.

D. The causality of prayer is in harmony with the will of God, and is not intended to change His decrees.

E. Prayer exercises a causality upon the good which it obtains, but not upon God Himself.

F. God uses prayer as an instrument in bringing about certain effects in the world.

G. The Catholic Church takes practical cognizance of the causality of prayer.



✠ A. It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that prayer, the petition of fitting things from God, is really the cause of those things which are asked of God in the petition. As we shall see in the course of this treatise, there are other ways in which prayer may be considered as a cause. As an act performed under the influence of charity by a person in the state of grace it is meritorious, that is, it is an action which deserves a reward from God, the reward of eternal life and of growth in the perfection of the life of grace in this world. Because it is something difficult, it can be considered as penal, and consequently



can be an act which is satisfactory, an act which makes up for the irreverence which has been offered to God by sin. Likewise it can, and frequently does, produce a certain comfort and spiritual consolation in the soul of the person who offers it to God.

But these three effects of prayer are effects which can be brought about by other acts in the supernatural order. Any good act performed under the influence of charity by a person in the state of grace in this world is meritorious of eternal life. Any good act which is difficult can be satisfactory, and any act which brings us into contact with God can produce a certain spiritual joy, a joy which is listed as one of the fruits of charity.

The type of causality with which we are concerned here is something proper to prayer, something which prayer possesses precisely because it is a petition of fitting things from God. It is the causality of prayer with regard to those things which the man who prays asks of God.<sup>1</sup> It is the causality of prayer with regard to its own object, considered as such. The power and the causality of prayer in this direction are called *impetratory*.

In teaching that prayer exercises that impetratory causality, the Catholic Church refers us to the explicit teaching of our Lord Himself. "Ask and you shall receive,"<sup>2</sup> He said, expressing the doctrine that certain benefits would be given to those who prayed, precisely because they prayed, and in answer to their prayer. Time and again by His own words, and in the teaching of the Apostles, He confirmed that doctrine.<sup>3</sup> There are certain benefits which man is to receive precisely because he has asked for them in prayer. The man who prays brings about in the world certain effects which would not be procured except through his prayer.

It is imperative that we should know the meaning of the term *cause*. A cause, in general, is a principle from which a thing proceeds, and upon which it depends in being. Of course, there are different kinds of causes, some principal and others secondary. The man who prays becomes the secondary or instrumental cause of the good for which he asks because he disposes that favor to be given by God. His activity is the source, the thing from which the favor granted takes its origin. That favor depends upon prayer in such a way that, if the prayer were not offered to God, the gift would not be received.

✠ B. True to his customary procedure, St. Thomas Aquinas made use of three errors on the causality of prayer to bring the true doctrine into clearer focus.<sup>4</sup> There were some who denied that prayer had any influence on the course of worldly events at all. Their denial was based upon their failure to realize that all the events of this world are directly under the control of God, who is the First Cause, and who is in all things, not only by His substance (that is, insofar as He keeps all things in being) and by His presence (that is, insofar as He sees and knows all things directly) but also by His power, that is, insofar as created things are immediately subject to being moved or determined by Him in any way whatsoever. Moreover, such an attitude fails to take the divine providence into consideration. The created things, the things of this world, are not only created, sustained in being and known immediately by God, not only subject to Him in every fiber of their being, but actually controlled and guided by the designs of God's holy providence. The effective plan in the mind of God by which all things are directed to their proper end has to be taken into account in the causality of prayer. Prayer is actually

a force in the government of the universe because it is addressed to and guaranteed by the provident and omnipotent God.

✠ C. Second, there is the error about the causality of prayer which is based upon fatalism. There have been those who have asserted that prayer could have no influence on the course of the world precisely because of the existence of divine providence. They believe that, since all things are embraced within the eternal plan of God's providence, a prayer which a man addresses to God here and now is bound to be useless and unavailing. If the favor which prayer seeks to obtain from God is something which is destined to be given, it will be granted, according to this particular error, altogether apart from the prayer. Likewise, if it has been decreed from all eternity that this particular thing would not be done, the petition of one human being, or of all human beings taken together, will never avail to bring it about.

Like all the other ramifications of fatalism, this error fails through an inadequate grasp of the very factor it set out to accentuate, divine providence. Those who hold this view fail to appreciate the fact that God's plan and government of the universe are not merely partial in their scope. Everything in the world, every least act, is envisioned in the plan of providence. So it is that man's prayer enters the scheme of providence as something seen and planned from all eternity. And it is in the designs of providence precisely in the character of a cause. From all eternity God has planned to give this particular good to man. Likewise He has planned and decreed the prayer that man will say for this benefit. And the favor is planned precisely as an effect of the prayer, as something which is to be granted to man in answer to

prayer, and consequently as something which would not be given if the prayer were not offered. The causality of prayer, as well as its freedom, comes from the God who is the Source of all being.

✠ D. The third error which St. Thomas uses to bring out the full meaning of the causality of prayer is found in the teaching of those who would admit the influence of prayer upon the course of events, but who would claim at the same time that this prayer was meant to change the decrees of God's providence. This fundamental miscalculation on the meaning of Christian prayer arises from the failure to take into account the sovereign fact of the divine immutability. God would not be the First Cause, He would not be God, if He could be changed or affected by any creature, actual or possible. Like the previous error, this one fails to take into account the fact that prayer itself is seen and ordered in the designs of the divine providence. God would not be God if there were even one fiber of being, or goodness, which was not planned and controlled in His eternal decrees, and of which He was not the Cause.

One of the most beautiful and profound doctrines in all of the Catholic theology of prayer is brought into high relief in the recognition of this error. It is the fact that Christian prayer is meant to take into account the eternity and the absolute immutability of God, and is said with full cognizance of the fact that the goods procured by prayer are precisely those which God has disposed from all eternity to be given in answer to prayer, and in that way alone. In other words the plan or design of Christian prayer, as an act of the practical intelligence, an act of petition, is meant to be a plan fully in harmony with the plan of God.<sup>5</sup> The Christian does not imagine



that, in praying, He bends the eternal will of God to change the intention it has already formed. The Christian who prays puts his own mind and his own will in harmony with the mind and will of God, and sets out to procure from God the very goods which He has designed to give man from all eternity, but only in answer to prayer.

If we pay attention to this fact, we can begin to realize the strength and the profundity of the causality of prayer. Since prayer is a cause, seen and ordered as such in the eternal decrees of the divine providence, it is evident that the power of prayer, in the last analysis, is not the puny force of the creature, but the power of God Himself. The activity by which the favor sought in prayer is procured is the act of God. Prayer is truly a cause, but a secondary and instrumental cause in the attainment of the benefits for which we petition God. The man who prays performs freely an act which is ordered by God as a real cause of the benefits which He wills to confer upon man. Prayer is not meant to change, but to fulfill the mysterious and holy decrees of God's providence.

✠ E. When we speak or think of prayer as a cause, we must remember that it is a cause with regard to the good which is obtained from it, and in no way with regard to the knowledge or the activity of God Himself. For there is a tremendous difference between a petition which is addressed to God and one which is directed to our fellow men. The petition which we make to man is directed to influence them in at least one of two ways. In the first place the petition is meant to enlighten the one to whom it is addressed with regard at least to our desire of the good for which we ask. The acts of the human will cannot be known directly by other men except insofar as



they are manifested and expressed to them. The petition is precisely the expression of a desire or a hope that the will forms. As a result the person to whom the petition is addressed is made aware of our desire for the good that is petitioned.

Furthermore an integral petition, one which gives the complex background that should be seen with the expression of the desire itself, is calculated to impress upon the one to whom the petition is made the reasons for which the granting of that petition would be good and reasonable. If the one to whom the petition is made is already cognizant of those reasons, it is the function of the petition to recall them to his mind.

Obviously there is no such necessity and no such orientation in the act of prayer, the petition of fitting things from God. God is already fully aware of our desire and of our hope. As a matter of fact He is the Cause of all that there is of being and perfection in our activity. There is nothing hidden from His gaze. His intelligence is always and eternally in act, and there is no possibility of making Him, the all-seeing God, aware of anything of which He is not, and has not been from all eternity, actually cognizant. Then the petition of prayer is not meant to add to His store of knowledge, or to recall to His mind something which the person praying desires Him to know. That which is of the essential condition of a prayer addressed to a human superior could not, under any circumstances, qualify the petition we offer to God.

There is another way in which a petition made to a human superior is meant or ordered to exercise a certain causality upon him. It is always understood that a plea made to a fellow man is intended to influence him to determine himself to act in accordance with the petition,

if he has not already come to a decision, and is meant to cause him to reverse his decision if he had previously intended to act other than in accordance with the purpose of the petition. Again, in the case of prayer, no such possibility is present. The will of God is absolutely immutable. No causality whatsoever is exercised, or is meant to be exercised upon God. The thing that is caused by the power of impetration is the favor which is asked of God in the prayer of petition.

✠ F. This thing which is obtained through prayer by the power of impetration, the thing for which we ask in prayer and which is given to us in answer to our prayers is something of which God is the Cause, and of which we are causes. He is the One who grants that favor. He is the First Cause. Our prayers obtain that favor. They are acts which constitute a real source or principle of the favor which we obtain, and upon which that favor depends in such a way that if the act of prayer were not performed, then the favor would not be obtained. But God uses our activity. The causality with regard to what we obtain through prayer is ours and God's, but the important fact about it is that it is one activity. The thing for which we ask is caused by God and by ourselves, but the glory of this for ourselves is that it is caused by us insofar as we act as instrumental causes, seen and ordered as such in the eternal designs of God's providence.

Ultimately, then, the power that brings about the benefits obtained through prayer is the power of God. The humblest Christian child, praying before the altar of God, is taking part in an activity stronger than all the natural forces of this world. That child is performing an act, and procuring an effect; the act is really hers and the effect is really due to her activity. But the force behind

her act, the force that uses her little prayer instrumentally, as the writer uses a pen or the painter a brush, is the omnipotence of God. The power which sustains her prayer, and which procures the good she seeks, is the very power which sustains and which founded the universe. Without ceasing to be something obtained through the prayer of the child, the benefit that is received in prayer is something procured by the power of God, and considered in the decrees of the divine providence. It is the privilege of man, since God has taught and commanded him to pray, to place his will in harmony with the will of God, to plan to have what God has planned to give, to co-operate in obtaining the effects which God Himself decrees and brings about.

Prayer, properly understood, in no way implies any reversal of values. The man who prays cannot be said to use the power of God to obtain his own selfish ends. In the last analysis, he rather subjects himself to the will of God. He works toward the accomplishment of a purpose decreed by God Himself. The man who prays and who secures the favor for which he beseeches God in prayer is raised by God to the ineffable glory of co-operating in bringing about the very effects which are seen and approved in the designs of providence. And, although prayer is by no means the only way in which man becomes the cause of other things which have been foreseen by divine providence as the effects of the activity of creatures, it is a real cause, a cause of the good and fitting things which God wills man to have and to acquire through his own activity.<sup>6</sup>

✠ G. If we examine this point closely enough, we can readily appreciate the concern the Church shows for prayer as a means for obtaining the benefits and the

relief of which she stands in need. In times of danger the Church, through its visible head, the vicar of Christ on earth, calls upon its children for the renewed support of their prayers. She knows that the prayer of Christians is a real and potent cause, an agency the force of which is rooted in and measured by the power of God Himself.

This particular aspect of the theology of prayer particularly throws light upon the attitude of the Church as a whole, and on the attitude of individual Christians with regard to the contemplative orders, those congregations of men and women whose lives are devoted expressly to the work of prayer. It was the fate of the religious in contemplative communities during the recent persecution in Spain to be tortured and to suffer the death of martyrdom as "parasites," as individuals who failed to contribute anything toward the well-being of the State. Actually, of course, this charge was as incongruous as that of impiety, of which SS. Peter and Paul were accused when they were brought to trial under Nero.

The entire literature of contemplation, particularly that which emanates from the Carmelite school, indicates clearly enough that the prayer of the contemplatives is in reality a petition of fitting things from God. It is a tremendous and active force expended for the well-being of men. Many a gift of God, which comes to the Church, to the State, and to the individual men who are members of the Church and of the State is a benefit which is caused by the prayers of the contemplative orders.

The fact that prayer is really the cause of the favors which are asked from God is a key for the understanding of Catholic history. The instructed Christian can well understand how a poor monk like St. Bernard could alter the course of the world's history. He was a man of prayer,

and the tremendous influence he wielded was the power and the effect of prayer. By the force of prayer the poor virgin, St. Catherine of Siena, brought back the popes to Rome, and ended one of the worst plagues that ever afflicted the Church of God. She succeeded where emperors had failed, because her power was the force of Christian prayer, and consequently the power of God Himself. We can see, too, how the Church of God and the visible head of the Church can emerge triumphant against all the machinations that the world and the evil spirits can evoke against the mystical body of Christ. For the Church and its leader have at their disposal a power greater by far than all the armies and the navies of this world. They are secure in the prayer of the people of God.

It must be remembered that the power and the causality of prayer belong to prayer as such. It is not the effect of some particular sort of prayer, but of the only act which the Church knows as prayer, the petition of fitting things from God. Meditation, contemplation, and all the other exercises of prayer contribute toward the effect of prayer insofar as they contribute to the perfection of the petition in which the essence of prayer consists.



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## CHAPTER IV

### THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

- A. Prayer is strictly necessary for man, in the sense that without it he will not obtain his salvation.
- B. By its very nature prayer is inseparable from the other factors requisite for the attainment of man's supernatural end.
- C. Final perseverance is something which can be obtained by prayer and which ordinarily will not be obtained without it.
- D. Advance in spiritual perfection is dependent upon prayer.
- E. Prayer is necessary for the full obedience to the law of God.
- F. Without prayer we shall not avoid all mortal sin.
- G. For those not in the state of grace, prayer is required for the favor of conversion.
- H. Prayer is also necessary as something commanded by Christ.
- I. This command binds at certain definite times.



✕ A. We can speak of a thing as being necessary in several different ways. There is an absolute necessity imposed upon a thing by its own nature. Thus certain conditions which flow from the material or formal cause of a thing are necessary to it. For example, man, as a rational animal, is necessarily a creature that is able to die, in the sense that the gift of immortality which God gave to our first parents, and which we would have had but for the sin of Adam, was not due to human nature as such. By the very fact that man is something composed, something made up of parts, it is possible that these parts should be separated, one from the other, that the body should no longer be animated and enlivened by the soul.

There is another sort of necessity which is imposed upon a thing by an outside force, superior to the force of the thing itself. Thus it is necessary that a stone should go into the air when it is thrown, and in the field of human events, it is necessary that a small nation should submit to conditions imposed by one that is larger and stronger.

But the kind of necessity with which we are concerned when we speak of the necessity of prayer is a necessity for the obtaining of some purpose. We speak of a thing as necessary for the attainment of a certain end when this end cannot be had without it. And, when the end itself is something of unique import, when it is the only end that can be attained, the thing which is necessary in order to obtain it is spoken of as necessary in the full and strict sense of the term. This is the sense in which we must consider the necessity of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, prayer is a cause. It is an activity seen in the order of divine providence as something upon which certain effects depend, in the sense that these effects will not be produced without it. Now, one of these effects is eternal salvation itself. To obtain this it is necessary that an adult, a person who has reached the use of reason, should pray for it. A person who does not pray, and is able to do so, will not attain the only ultimate beatitude which is possible for man, God Himself, to be seen and possessed in the eternal felicity of the beatific vision. Such is the teaching of the Catholic Church.

We must not allow ourselves to lose sight of the fact that there is only one ultimate beatitude possible for man to attain. That beatitude is supernatural, and it consists in the possession of God in the beatific vision

by one who lives the life of grace in the capacity of a member of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. If a person fails to attain that end, even though he should obtain every created good in the universe, his life would be an utter and perpetual failure. This is the object which cannot be attained without prayer by one who is capable of praying.

In the sense that prayer is designed, in the eternal decrees of the divine providence, to be an act without which an adult will not attain his eternal salvation, prayer is spoken of as necessary with the necessity of means. It is necessary in another sense also, necessary because it is the object of a special command issued by our Lord to His followers. It is a command that is serious and positive, a command which must be fulfilled under penalty of mortal sin. Considered in this light, prayer is said to be necessary with the necessity of precept.

✠ B. Prayer is by no means the only factor that is necessary with the necessity of means for the attainment of our salvation. Basically, of course, only those who leave this life in union with Christ our Saviour, living the life of habitual grace which He died on the cross to procure for men will enter into eternal beatitude. That life implies all those supernatural virtues which follow in the train of habitual grace. There are those who enter into eternal life without ever having performed a human act in the course of their earthly sojourn. These are the baptized persons who die without ever having attained the use of reason. For these the sacrament of baptism is absolutely requisite, except for those who are martyred as infants, and who are configured to Christ in the baptism of blood.

For persons who attain the use of reason after having

been baptized, prayer is still requisite. These persons are called upon to merit their eternal salvation, that is, to perform free human acts, proceeding from the life of habitual grace, and motivated by that charity in which the perfection of the supernatural life consists formally. These meritorious acts are so called because, in the order of divine providence, the reward of eternal life is due to them out of justice. The reward that is due to these acts includes not only eternal life, but an increase in the perfection of the habitual grace which is the source of this life. For habitual grace is something which is meant to increase in intensity and in perfection during the course of this life. After this life is over, there will be no possibility of any such increase.

Besides prayer and merit, the sacraments, in particular baptism, are required for the attainment of eternal life. As we have seen, baptism is requisite for eternal life in the sense that one who has not attained the use of reason, and who is not martyred for the faith of Christ will not achieve the beatific vision apart from the actual reception of the sacrament of baptism. One who has reached the use of reason finds it necessary also. However, the intention of receiving baptism, which may, of course, be implicit, is at least necessary for eternal salvation, so that, as a matter of fact no person will be saved apart from the influence of this sacrament. And, since baptism is the sacrament which gives the character, the power by which we are enabled to receive the other sacraments, and in particular to make the Eucharist our own, the Eucharist is requisite in the sense that a person will not be saved independently of the Blessed Sacrament.

Among these things which are necessary for salvation, prayer, of course, holds its own place. These requisites



for salvation are not separate and independent factors, but realities which are intimately connected one with the other. If, in the designs of God's providence they are all requisite, it is not that the path of salvation is thereby made more difficult, but that, in their perfection they demand one another. Prayer is not merely a requirement added to merit and the sacraments without any intrinsic reason. It is connected with merit by the fact that the same charity which is the principle of merit is the very love which should, of its very nature, express itself in prayer. And the sacraments of the Church are themselves expressions of a faith which is meant to illuminate prayer.

✠ C. There is, however, one difference between the effect of prayer and merit which should be noted in connection with the necessity of prayer. For a person who has reached the use of reason, final perseverance is, of course, a necessary prelude for the attainment of eternal life. Final perseverance is the actual and effective conjunction of death with the state of habitual grace. Now, this final perseverance cannot be merited by any act, or any group of acts which man can perform here on earth.<sup>2</sup> In other words, there is no act which we can perform which can earn for us in strict justice the privilege and the special grace of dying in the love and friendship of God, living the life of an adopted child of God in the mystical body of Jesus Christ, His Son.

But this final perseverance can be procured by prayer, and as a matter of fact will be obtained only by those who actually pray. Such is the teaching of the Catholic Church, expressed in the book *De Dono Perseverantiae* of St. Augustine. "It is evident that God will give some things, like the beginning of faith, even to those who do not pray, and that He has reserved other things, like per-



severance to the end, exclusively for those who pray.”<sup>3</sup> That same teaching is brought out by the Second Council of Orange: “The help of God must always be implored, even by those who have been born again (through baptism) and healed (of the wound of sin) in order that they may arrive at a good end and that they may continue in the good work.”<sup>4</sup> The same final perseverance which cannot be merited can and must be obtained through prayer.

There are, as we shall see at the proper time, certain conditions under which prayer is infallibly efficacious, certain conditions under which prayer will always obtain the favor it asks from God.<sup>5</sup> Among those conditions are two which have a direct bearing on the matter in question, the notion of the necessity of prayer. In order infallibly to attain the object it begs from God prayer must be said for one’s self, and for things which are requisite for salvation. In the light of this fact we see that prayer is not only something necessary for the attainment of salvation, but is a force, which, if exercised properly, will inevitably procure that salvation for us. Naturally prayer said for others is efficacious also, and, as we shall see, it is a matter of precept to a certain extent at least. But it is possible that there should be an obstacle to the reception of the favor that is begged from God on the part of the one for whom it is asked when the beneficiary is a person distinct from the one who says the prayer.

It is imperative, for the proper appreciation of prayer, that we should realize the meaning of this necessity. It is requisite that we should see the teaching on the necessity of prayer in its objective meaning, rather than merely as a practical inducement to prayer. Prayer, that act which is defined as the petition of fitting things from God, is

such that, in the decrees of the divine providence, a man will not persevere to the end of his life without it. If he does not ask God for this privilege, he will not die in the state of grace, and as a result, despite his achievements in this world, his life always will have been a failure of the most miserable sort. And if he does make use of the instrument of prayer, and he prays properly, he will infallibly obtain the gift of final perseverance for himself. That is the importance and the necessity of prayer. We must not allow ourselves to overlook or to neglect the truth of that necessity.

✠ D. But prayer has also another function in the spiritual life of the individual Christian. It is something absolutely requisite for the growth in intensity which the life of grace is meant to undergo in this world.<sup>6</sup> The life of habitual grace is such that it is meant to increase in intensity and perfection in this world. The law of progress, which dominates the world of bodies, and which governs the intellectual and moral life of man in this world because man is a rational animal, a bodily creature informed and vivified by a spiritual soul, is also meant to activate the supernatural activity of man. God has, in His mercy, chosen to deal with man in this world, even in the supernatural order, according to the laws of man's own nature, and by means which are in proportion to his ordinary and natural activity. Thus, just as the person who never develops physically beyond the condition of infancy is looked upon as afflicted and deformed, just as a person who would not increase in intellectual stature from the condition of childhood into the condition of adult perfection is looked upon as mentally dwarfed, the person who does not grow in spiritual perfection with the passing years is what Garrigou-Lagrange

calls a "spiritual dwarf."<sup>7</sup> The tendency toward this increase in perfection in this world is inherent in the very concept of the grace of a member of Christ in this world.

Prayer is necessary for this advance in the life of grace, in the sense that a soul will definitely not advance along the pathways of perfection without the activity of prayer. That truth is an integral part of the Catholic doctrine on the spiritual life. Every standard treatise on the spiritual life includes prayer, the petition of fitting things from God, among the acts which are listed as general means for the attainment of perfection. Furthermore the causality and the necessity of prayer in the advance to Christian perfection have the same position that the causality and the necessity of prayer hold with regard to the attainment of salvation. Here again merit and the sacraments of the Church have a causative influence.

If we look into the definition of prayer, the Catholic teaching on the nature of the act of prayer, we shall be able to see why, in the harmonious decrees of the divine providence, the act of prayer is requisite for the attainment of salvation, and for advance in the life of grace. The work of man in the supernatural order, the task he is called upon to perform as a member of the mystical body of Christ, the expression of that life which is a formal, though analogous partaking of the life of God Himself, naturally has a source in the activity of the will of man himself, although this act of man's will is something produced in man through the activity of God's grace. That act of the will is a desire to achieve the end and purpose of the supernatural life, a desire inspired and motivated by a love of God who is actually the end and purpose of that life. Such an act is the Christian

hope, inspired and motivated by charity which is expressed to God in prayer.

But that is not all. In order to achieve the end of the supernatural life, the salvation in which his only ultimate beatitude consists, and in order to advance in perfection, according to the demands of the life of grace within him, man must not only will or intend this end, but will it in the manner which is proper. He must not lose sight of the fact that he is not dealing with God as with an equal, but as a Superior, as His Creator, as the One upon whom he depends utterly and absolutely. The supernatural life does not cease to be supernatural because man is destined for it, or because he actually lives it. It still remains something which is in no way due to the nature of man, something which he is unable to earn in its beginnings, and something, the plenitude of which he could never merit outside the influence of God's mercy. In the present state of redeemed nature, it is something which man could not have apart from the influence of the passion of Christ.

That dependence upon the mercy of God is expressed in the prayer of petition. When we petition God, we address Him precisely as our Superior. It is interesting to note that the definition of prayer sometimes adopted, "a familiar speaking to God," is true as far as it goes, but it does not express the full meaning and the full perfection of prayer. Prayer is more than a mere speaking to God. It is a speaking to Him precisely in the attitude which we must adopt toward Him, the attitude of suppliants with regard to the One upon whose mercy they depend entirely. By the fact that it is said to another, prayer is the expression of a desire that is to be fulfilled by the aid of another. By the fact that it is a petition,

rather than a mere request or a command, it is the expression of a desire for something which can be attained only by the activity of the superior to whom it is addressed.

✠ E. Prayer is thus necessary, with the necessity of means, not only for eternal salvation and for final perseverance, but for the fulfilling of the law of God in which the living of the life of grace consists. All the other commandments which make up the directing force for the achievement of the Christian life are determinations and continuations of the fundamental law of charity. Thus the prayer which is commanded and motivated by charity is necessary for the full living of the life of charity.

In treating of this matter, we must be careful to distinguish the truth proposed by the Catholic Church from the errors which have disfigured the teachings of some individuals. We must distinguish, first of all, a complete obedience to the commandments of God from an incomplete obedience to them. Thus it is possible for a man to obey one of the commandments while he neglects to follow another. And it is possible for a man to obey the commandments for a short time, or for a considerable time, or even for the duration of his life. Prayer is necessary for the avoidance of sin over a considerable period of time. It is also necessary for the avoidance of sin at the time of very serious temptations.

It must be stressed that prayer is not necessary for the avoidance of all sins, in the sense that every act performed by a person who does not pray would be a sin. Such an assertion is contrary to the teaching that God gives us through His Church. But, through the damage done to our human nature by original sin, we are prone



to stray away from the law of God, and we would not avoid sin for any considerable time without the medicinal grace which God offers to us. Neither would we as a matter of fact, avoid sin at a time of serious and strong temptation without that assistance which God holds out to us. But the important point is that God gives that grace to avoid sin to those who ask for it in prayer. The Council of Trent teaches us clearly on this point, using words employed by St. Augustine. "God does not command the impossible, but He warns you by His command to do what is in your power, and to ask what is not in your power, and He aids you so that this will be in your power."<sup>8</sup> Thus the keeping of the entire law of God is within our power insofar as we pray and beseech from God the grace which He wills to give us in answer to our prayer.

✠ F. Seen in this light, the perpetual insistence of the Catholic Church that her children use prayer as a means for staying out of sin is revealed as having a magnificent theological background. The injunction to prayer as a means to avoiding sin is not merely a pious wish, not merely the substitution of a good act for an act which is morally wrong, not merely a precept of good psychological motivation, but the expression of the order of divine providence. Sin can be avoided by prayer, will not be avoided without prayer, and will infallibly be avoided by prayer (we are speaking of mortal sin, and not of those light faults which will almost inevitably afflict the lives even of the most perfect servants of God in this life).

✠ G. Again, for those in the state of sin, prayer is normally necessary for the grace of repentance and for reinstatement in the life of habitual grace. We say that it is normally necessary, because there is such a thing as a

miracle in the supernatural order. There have been cases in the history of sanctity similar to the conversion of St. Paul, who was endowed with habitual grace and converted to God independently of any previous activity on his part. However, that is not the normal or ordinary procedure in the case of penance. There is, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent, a well-defined process by which a man is disposed to receive the gift of habitual grace, either for the first time, or after he has lost it. The soul is ordinarily disposed to conversion by acts of faith, hope, fear, and initial love.<sup>9</sup> These acts are performed by a soul that is not in the state of habitual grace. But they are not performed independently of the grace of God. God moves and directs the soul to the performance of these acts through His actual grace, which is always at the disposal of the sinner. We must not lose sight of the fact that the grace of beginning this progress toward disposal for the reception of grace itself is something which comes to us independently of prayer. Prayer itself, as an activity in the supernatural order, is something which depends upon the help of God. We would not be able to pray if God did not give us the grace to petition Him for His favors.

But faith, hope, fear, and love of God for His sake are acts which are expressed in prayer. Prayer is thus in this sense, a necessary step for the soul who tends toward conversion. Prayer is also considered as practically necessary for the successful solution of the important problems which face the Christian in the course of his earthly career. At the same time the ordinary teaching of the Catholic Church assures us that no man will do any great work within the mystical body of Christ unless he is a man of prayer, and unless the force that he exercises is,

in the last analysis, the power of prayer. Our Lord Himself told the Apostles that one particular work they had attempted, the casting out of a devil, was a task which would not be accomplished except with prayer and fasting.<sup>10</sup> And fasting is a work of mortification, a natural accompaniment of prayer.

St. James told the faithful to whom he addressed his Catholic Epistle that prayer was necessary for the reception of the gifts they wished to have from God. "You have not because you ask not."<sup>11</sup> And the petitions they made to God would be invalid if they did not conform to the strict definition of prayer. "You ask, and you receive not; because you ask amiss: that you may consume it on your concupiscences." Historically, Holy Scripture tells us that the chosen people were saved from the divine wrath by the prayer of Moses, and that they would have been destroyed had it not been for the necessary intervention of the prayer of petition. "And He said that He would destroy them: had not Moses, His chosen stood before Him in the breach; to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them."<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact the entire content of the deuterocanonical books of Tobias and of Judith constitutes a teaching on the efficacy and the necessity of prayer.

✠ H. Prayer is said to be necessary in another sense also, because it is something which Christ Himself commanded His followers to do. It is thus necessary with the necessity of a serious precept, failure to obey which is disruptive of the life of grace itself, as being incompatible with the charity in which the perfection of the life of grace consists. The obligation to pray arising from the command of our Lord is strikingly expressed on the pages of Holy Scripture. We are commended to "pray

without ceasing,"<sup>13</sup> and told that we must "allow nothing to hinder us from praying always."<sup>14</sup> The reason that underlies that command is the place that prayer occupies, of its very nature, in the economy of the Christian life. The command to pray, like every other command that is given by our Lord, is an expression of the law of charity. We are to pray, in the final analysis, because the life of charity is such as to demand its expression in Christian prayer.

The command to pray is obviously a positive precept. As such it is binding, not always, but whenever necessity for the performance of this act arises. A negative precept, like the command to abstain from murder, is binding at all times. The command to pray is binding at certain specified times in the life of a man, and, by virtue of the words in which the Son of God gave this order to us, it is obvious that it binds frequently.

✠ I. The theologians tell us that we are obligated to perform the act of prayer when we attain the use of reason, at the approach of death, and frequently during the course of our lives.<sup>15</sup> The obligation of praying at the dawn of man's reasonable life means that man is obliged to pray as soon as he recognizes the necessity of praying. The necessity of praying at the hour of death is nothing but a recognition of the necessity of prayer for final perseverance, a necessity which, by the way, is expressed in one of the two most common formulas of prayer in use in the Catholic Church, the "Hail Mary." The obligation of praying several times in the course of our lives is not one which can be, or which should be determined in any merely mathematical manner. As we have seen, prayer is an expression and manifestation of charity, in such a way that the life of charity cannot exist

in this world without frequently being expressed in prayer. For charity is a voluntary, rather than an emotional love. As such it tends to act. It is dynamic, a force which, if it exists, will necessarily set in motion the other acts by which it attains its end. Prayer is one of those acts. Hence, if a person is really in the state of grace, and possesses the habit of charity, that charity will inevitably inspire and motivate acts of prayer many times. Thus the command to pray many times in the course of our lives becomes an indication of the necessity of being in the state of grace, and a manifestation of the fact that prayer is inseparably united to the life and the force of charity.

Further the obligation to pray is binding upon us in a special manner on certain definite occasions. We must pray, for instance, whenever there arises a grave temptation which will not be overcome except by the force of prayer. It is Catholic doctrine that such temptations actually exist, and that the act of prayer is thus requisite for the full living of the life of grace. When such an occasion arises, prayer is commanded because it is a necessary means for the living of the life of habitual grace. Again prayer is commanded whenever we are in the state of sin, and the necessity of re-establishing ourselves in the life of grace is apparent. Prayer is necessary also at those times when we are called upon to perform acts which by their very nature suppose and demand the act of prayer, like the hearing of Mass and the reception of the sacraments. Then, because prayer is a necessary expression and consequence of charity, it is commanded wherever charity toward the Church or toward our neighbors demands it. Thus in the presence or the danger of any grave calamity, the Christian is bound to pray.



Finally, there is a real obligation to pray when any project of definite importance in the life of the Church especially demands it. The great councils of the Church have always begun with prayer, and at the present time the Holy Father commends the work of protecting the Church to the prayer of Christians throughout the world. It was thus by no accident that the most illustrious writings in the history of the Church, like the first book of the *Contra Gentiles*, begin and end with words of Christian prayer.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE FITNESS OF PRAYER

- A. By its very nature prayer is beneficial to man.
- B. It tends to make a man practically cognizant of the truths which guide his supernatural life.
- C. Prayer renders a man disposed to receive the gifts which he seeks to have from God.
- D. As a petition it is a fitting way for man to acquire a difficult good which is possible only through the mercy of a superior.
- E. Prayer gives man an intimacy with God.
- F. The Catholic Church has condemned the teachings of those men who held that the prayer of petition was in any way unworthy of a Christian, even in the highest state of perfection.
- G. An education which neglects prayer is inadequate and disastrous.



✠ A. St. Thomas Aquinas and the great traditional proponents of the Catholic doctrine are at pains to have us realize the aptitude of prayer for the part it plays in the economy of our salvation. They insist upon the fact that man finds prayer to be an action, not only in harmony with his nature and with the particular demands of his supernatural life, but an activity which, by its very nature, is calculated to help him increase the perfection of the life of grace. They show that prayer is such as to give us an actual familiarity with God which is demanded by the life of charity. Through their teaching we can see that the errors about the fitness of prayer, errors which have been condemned by the Church during the

course of her history are such as to destroy, not only the concept of prayer, but the ideas of charity and of the Christian life itself.

This teaching about the fitness of prayer has a tremendous practical import. If we have an adequate realization of the reason why prayer is said to be particularly well adapted to the living of the supernatural life, then we are bound to see the practical points upon which we must insist in order to obtain the good which God wishes us to receive from the practice of prayer. We shall know what to look for in the petition considered as a whole, and in the various acts which go to make up the integral or perfect petition of prayer.

In the first place we must realize that the act of prayer is something that is instituted and commanded for our benefit, and not for any advantage which God might derive from it. When we pray we have no intention of giving any information to God, nor do we intend to change or affect in any way the intention of His Divine will. All the parts which go into the making of a human petition are such as might be employed to inform the one to whom the petition is made, or to affect his choice. But the parts which enter into the fullness of Christian prayer are such as to perfect the activity of the one who prays toward the attainment of that end which he seeks from God in prayer.

Prayer is something, then, which is instituted, and which is commanded, for our benefit. That is the center of all the teaching on prayer. It is a cause, but it is a cause instituted and constituted as such in the order of divine providence, because it is the sort of action which should be a cause in the life and the activity of one who has been called to be an adopted child of Christ. Prayer

is an action which expresses our charity for God, and our hope in Him. But it is not an expression which has been arbitrarily imposed. It is the kind of action which, properly performed, tends to make us love God more fully, hope in Him with greater confidence, and serve Him with greater devotion.

✠ B. The truths which we must realize in order to work effectively toward the accomplishment of our salvation are the very truths which the practice of prayer tends to stress in our lives. St. Thomas taught this truth very effectively in a striking passage in the *Compendium Theologiae*. He says, "Prayer is necessary to man for obtaining favors from God an account of the one who prays; in order that he himself may consider his own defects, and may turn his mind to desiring, fervently and piously, that which he hopes to obtain by praying; for in this way he is rendered worthy to receive it."<sup>1</sup>

The advantages of which St. Thomas speaks accrue to the man who prays, in proportion to the clarity of understanding he exercises in the act of prayer. The man who pays any attention to the formulas of prayer is bound to come to a practical cognizance of his defects and his utter dependence upon the mercy of God. If he realizes what he is asking of God in prayer, he will understand that this is an eternal and supernatural beatitude, a guerdon which he could never possibly obtain through the exercise of his unaided natural faculties, and which lies beyond the possibility of attainment by the natural activity of the entire human race. He knows furthermore that he has rendered himself actually unfit for the reception of this favor by the manifold sin which he has committed against the God who has shown such mercy toward him.

The understanding engendered by prayer is practical

in nature. That is, it has reference to an end which man actually seeks, to a favor which he actually desires to obtain from God. The desire which is strong enough to influence him to ask God to grant its object is, and should be, strong enough to inspire him to work and act in accordance with the hope and the charity he expresses in prayer. Through the practice of prayer, then, a man is inspired to resolve, and to resolve efficaciously, the living of the life of grace, obedience to the commandments of God, and the avoidance of that sin which alone can stand in the way of our ultimate beatitude.

✠ C. The Christian is rendered worthy to receive the favor which he asks of God in prayer because prayer tends to make him desire this favor. The gift of eternal life is granted to those who live the life of grace in this world. As a matter of fact, the life of heaven is nothing more or less than the unfolding and the connatural perfection of the life of grace. In this way the life of grace in this world is described with technical correctness as the beginning, and the introductory or preparative stage, of the life of heaven. The intention which prayer is, of its very nature, adapted to inspire in the man who prays is the intention of living this life of grace, of staying in the state of grace so that he will die, and his period of preparation will end, while he is in that state. In this way it is dispositive to eternal life.

Looked at in this sense, the prayer which our Lord taught to His followers and which He wished them to use is an effective means for the practical teaching of Christian doctrine. There is a standard axiom in the Catholic theology *Lex orandi est lex credendi*, "the standard of prayer is the standard of belief." Because prayer is of its nature adapted to illustrate the content of Christian



teaching, the Catechism of the Council of Trent and the commentaries on that work utilize the Lord's Prayer as one means of teaching Christian doctrine. St. Thomas started to use the same prayer as an instrument of teaching in what he designed as a popular exposition of Catholic doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

✠ D. Prayer is adapted to human activity, and beneficial to man in another sense, for the reason that it enables him to act in accordance with his customary mode of procedure, and to procure a good which he is not able to obtain by his own unaided efforts, through the action and the kindness of his superior. Petitioning is, after all, an act to which man is accustomed, and which he performs frequently. One of the best developed arts governing man's activity is the art of rhetoric, which in the last analysis, is an art of human petitioning. Rhetoric is, after all, ordered to persuade, and there is no question of persuading God in our prayers. But our prayers are, to a certain extent, directed to persuade us so to live and to act as to render ourselves disposed and worthy to receive the favor we beg from God.

To be able to act in a way that is consonant with his own nature and with his own custom in the attainment of the eternal life which constitutes his ultimate and supernatural beatitude is thus a favor which God gives to man. The fact that man is enabled to pray for his eternal life, and to receive it as an answer to his prayer makes the life of man more perfectly ordered and harmonious. The very tendencies by which he is prone to call upon his superiors for help in the attainment of a benefit which it is not in his power to attain without them can and should be exercised in the progress of man toward heaven. The mode of proceeding in the natural

life is raised to be the manner in which the adopted son of God achieves his perfection.

Thus, it would, of course, have been perfectly possible for God to have given man his salvation without having made it necessary for man to pray to receive it. But, in the light of Catholic teaching, this necessity of prayer is itself a mark of God's mercy to man. It is better for man to achieve his salvation as the effect of prayer than to have been able to do so without the necessity of praying.

✠ E. The second aspect of prayer which renders it especially beneficial to man is the fact that it renders man the familiar of God.<sup>3</sup> The saints laid special stress upon this point. There is a certain familiarity requisite for any kind of petition. Naturally we are not prone to approach a superior unless we have some title or reason by which we have a legitimate access to him. In the ordinary running of the world's affairs, a man who desires to petition a superior has either to know that superior already or to have some introduction to him.

Prayer differs from the petition which is made to a human superior in that it does not require any previous intimacy. Rather it makes the intimacy which must accompany any petition. The act of prayer establishes us within the select circle of those servants of God who frequent His court. He wishes this petition. As a matter of fact, He commands us to pray. And, for St. John Chrysostom, the final perfection and glory of prayer consisted in this, that the man who prayed had the privilege of access to the living God at any time. He exercises his privilege of friendship with the Creator of heaven and earth, and makes his own influence felt in the task of bringing about the glory of God through the activity and the perfection of His creatures.

We must not allow ourselves to think about this teaching on intimacy with God in prayer as if it were merely some exaggeration of sentimental pietism. After all, there is such a thing as intimacy, and intimacy with the great of this world is normally accounted a very worth-while thing. Intimacy consists in the actual frequenting of this person, in the capacity of a friend. While God offers the privilege of intimacy with Himself to all, in giving them the grace to pray, only those can be classed as the real and actual intimates of God who take advantage of His offer and actually speak to Him. This speaking to God is evidently not the sort which we would hold with any earthly superior. We cannot approach God as His equal in any way whatsoever. We approach Him in prayer, and we speak to Him in begging Him for the favors which He has destined to give to His intimates in prayer.

✠ F. There have been false teachers in the history of the Church who have denied this doctrine of the fitness of prayer. In the year 1687, the sovereign pontiff, Innocent XI, in his Apostolic Constitution *Coelestis Pastor*, solemnly condemned the teachings of Michael de Molinos, one of the principal writers of that corrupt school of spirituality which goes by the name of quietism. Sixty-eight propositions were extracted from his writings and condemned indiscriminately as meriting all the ecclesiastical censures, heresy not excepted. The fourteenth among them reads as follows: "For one who is resigned to the will of God, it is not fitting to ask anything of God, because to ask [*petere*], is an imperfection since it is the act of our proper will and our own choice. And it [to ask in prayer] is to wish that the divine will should be conformed to ours, rather than that ours should be conformed to the divine. The saying of the gospel, 'Ask and

you shall receive' was not directed by Christ to interior souls, who do not wish to have any will. As a matter of fact souls of this sort arrive at a stage in which they cannot ask for anything at all."<sup>4</sup>

The errors of Fenelon, in his book *Explications des Maximes des Saints sur la Vie Intérieure* were not as crass as those of Molinos, but for that reason they were all the more dangerous. Their perversion of Christian doctrine drove the great Bossuet to expose them pitilessly. Fenelon did not come out baldly and state that prayer was an imperfection, as Molinos had done. He did say, however, that "in the contemplative or unitive life, every interested motive of hope and fear is lost."<sup>5</sup> This is contained in the second of the twenty-three propositions extracted from this book and condemned by Innocent XII.

The errors of the quietists, and of the semiquietists as the followers of Fenelon were called, were apparently based upon an exaggeration of Christian perfection. The quietists looked down upon the teachers of traditional Catholic morality as being content with an ideal of the Christian life substantially lower than their own. However, the fact of the matter was that the quietists and their imitators offered a teaching that was not too high, but actually destructive of Christian perfection, and even the Christian life in a person who would be unfortunate enough to take that doctrine seriously. For the quietists charity was not a dynamic thing at all. It was construed as an act utterly apart from the fabric of the ordinary Christian life. It was looked upon as a sentimental act, which did nothing to influence the acts of the other virtues. All of this was quite convenient for those who considered the commonplace following of the command-



ments as beneath their dignity. The same perfection which shut out hope and prayer also excluded the obedience to the other commandments of God. They had a concept of prayer that was imperfect in the extreme. And so they failed in their teaching about a state of perfection that would exclude the petition of fitting things from God, the prayer of the Christian.

By the condemnation of the quietists, the Church affirmed the truth that prayer is an activity which befits a person in every stage of the spiritual life, even the highest. The desire that we should be united with God forever in heaven, and thus glorify Him in the most perfect way that any creature can contribute to His glory, that desire, motivated by the love of God for His own sake and expressed in prayer, is the driving force of the Christian life.

✠ G. The teaching on the necessity and the fitness of prayer has a very serious repercussion on the problem of Christian education. Not only must the training of the Catholic include instruction on the nature and the necessity of prayer in order that the Catholic doctrine may be given completely, but there must be a proper understanding about the function of prayer in the moral life. As we have seen, prayer is an activity which is requisite for the living of a morally good life, in the sense that without prayer a person will not overcome all the temptations, and the serious temptations which he will encounter. In other words, without prayer a man will not lead a good moral life, will not live successfully the life of one who is called to be an adopted child of God. The fitness of prayer, on the other hand, shows the intimate relations existing between the act of prayer and the other operations which enter into the framework of Christian life.



Prayer, therefore, is requisite for the good and successful living of life. This life includes activity which is directed toward the State and the Church, as well as that which has reference directly to one's self or to another individual. As a matter of fact a man will not fulfill the measure of his citizenship, he will not live as a worthy member of the State unless he prays. And any course of instruction which aims to bring men to good and successful citizenship, and which fails to insist upon the function of prayer is doomed irrevocably to failure. Christian prayer, the petition of fitting things from God, the act which is, in the designs of God's providence, necessary for the full living of a moral life, the act which stimulates and perfects all of the other operations which a good man is called upon to perform, is a basic and necessary factor in moral education.

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## CHAPTER VI

### PRAYER AS WORSHIP

A. As the petition of fitting things from God prayer is essentially an act of religion.

B. Religion is a potential part of justice.

C. The prayer of petition is a practical acknowledgment of God's supreme excellence.

D. Prayer has a distinct relation to all the other acts of religion.

E. Prayer is meant to be summed up in sacrifice, and Christian prayer is expressed in the sacrifice of the Mass.

F. All other Christian prayers are connected with the prayer of the Mass.



✘ A. The teaching that prayer is an act of the virtue of religion is one of the most precious elements of all the traditional Catholic doctrine on prayer. In some spiritual books a distinction is drawn between what is known as the prayer of adoration, that in which the soul pays its tribute of love and respect to God, and the prayer of petition, the petition of fitting things from God, which is looked upon as one sort of prayer, and one of considerably lower perfection than the other sorts. That distinction, made in ignorance of the teaching of St. Thomas, and of the traditional theologians, could not but have a bad effect upon the study of prayer in particular, and of the spiritual life in general.

The traditional exponents of Catholic doctrine teach

almost without exception that prayer is an act of worship, an act of the virtue of religion. And the prayer which falls into that category is not some rare and indefinable act, having only the loosest sort of connection with the prayer of petition, but is actually the prayer of petition itself.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, there is no essential definition of prayer other than that which was recognized by St. Thomas and the great theologians. It is the petition of fitting things from God, and nothing else, which holds the high rank of an act of worship.

Naturally this insistence upon an act of prayer distinct from and independent of petition came from a tendency to undervalue the virtue and the act of Christian hope. That misunderstanding assumed heretical and dangerous proportions in the writings of the quietists. In this case it did nothing worse than engender a certain confusion, and obscure the intrinsic beauty of the treatise on Christian prayer. The objective and traditional teaching, on the other hand, implies and expounds an appreciation of all the acts of the Christian life in the place and the proportion which God has given to them. It is based upon the realization that in this world, charity is not meant to be a virtue divorced from Christian hope.

✠ B. It is important that prayer is classified as an act of religion, rather than of hope. Religion is that one among the Christian virtues which renders us disposed and able to give to God the service and the honor which is His due, because of His supreme excellence. It is listed in the order of Thomistic theology<sup>2</sup> among the potential parts of the virtue of justice. A potential part, among the virtues, is a virtue or quality which is reduced to another, a cardinal virtue, as a model, but which fails in some way or other to manifest the full perfection and

meaning of the cardinal virtue. Justice is the virtue by which we are disposed to give to another that which is due to him, and to render this in perfect equality. Obviously, then, a virtue could be listed as a potential part of justice which tends to give to another that which is due to him, but either not to full and perfect equality, or something to which he has not a title in the strict sense.

In the first way, religion and piety, among others, are potential parts of justice. For religion tends to make us render to God that which is due to Him, but obviously it is not within our power, as creatures, to give God the honor and the service which He deserves. Piety, which is directed to the service and the recognition of our parents and of the State, fails for a similar reason, or from these sources a man receives more than he could ever possibly pay back. Gratitude, friendship, and all the other real virtues which are associated with them do not reach the full measure of the perfection of justice, because the good which they render to others is not a thing to which these others have a strict right in justice.

Prayer is then classified in Catholic teaching as one of those acts which gives to God the service and the recognition which is His due, and in the measure in which we are able and called upon to give them. This is the reason why prayer is classified as an act of religion rather than as an act of hope, or even of charity. As a matter of fact, the desire which prayer manifests to God is the desire of Christian hope, motivated and inspired by the force of charity. But prayer is not an act of the theological virtues, it is not defined as something which belongs directly to hope. Obviously the desire, and the petition in which that desire is expressed are two different things.

It is the petition as such and not the desire which motivates it which is classified as an act of Christian worship.

✠ C. To realize the meaning of this teaching, we have only to go over briefly what we have learned about the prayer of petition and its conditions. Petition is an act of the practical intelligence, a kind of plan wherein a certain good is ordered and disposed to be procured with the power and the aid of a superior. Moreover it is an act in which something is expressed to a superior. We have seen in the previous chapter that the act of prayer, and all the economy of prayer are directed to our benefit, rather than to the benefit of God. He stands in need of no information and of no influence on our part. Then, canceling out of the petition of prayer all those elements which belong not to petition as such, but only to a petition which is addressed to human superiors, we see clearly that prayer, the prayer of petition, is truly an act of worship, an act in which we give to God the service which is due to Him. For, if the person praying has no intention of telling God anything He does not know already, if he has no intention of trying to influence the decision of God, it remains only that he speaks to God as a superior in an act which by its very nature is such as to acknowledge practically the status of a superior. He speaks to God as to the One upon whom he depends, and in whom he hopes. That is the recognition, the practical and vital recognition of the excellence of God. That is the act of religion.

Then every prayer, every act which conforms to the essential definition of prayer is an act of worship. It is a living manifestation of the Christian's recognition that God is supreme, and the End of his life. In the act of prayer, and the important point is, in any petition of



fitting things from God, the Christian attests his practical and vital convictions that God is the One whom he desires as his last End, and the One in whom he puts his hope. It is a manifestation of the practical intelligence, of a faculty or power of man which is not intended to work in solitary isolation, but which orders the acts of all the other powers of man. Then it is an act of worship in which ultimately the whole man is meant to manifest his recognition of God's supreme excellence.

✠ D. Although religion is one virtue, distinct from all the others which characterize the soul in the state of grace, it is the source of many distinct acts. The service of God is something which should be accomplished, not by the act of any one faculty, but in every way in which man can act, since the excellence of God is such that all created things should co-operate in referring to it. The virtue of religion is a quality of the human will. The first act of religion is an act of the will, an act which is known to the traditional theologians as the act of devotion. Devotion is the act in which a man gives himself promptly and generously to the service of God. This is the principal act of religion, the act to the perfection of which all the others are ordered.<sup>3</sup>

The second act of religion is prayer, the act in which the intelligence gives its practical meed of service to God. Prayer and devotion constitute the interior acts of religion. All the others exist because it is natural and proper for man to manifest the internal acts which he conceives through external and sensible operation. These external and sensible acts of religion can have reference to the body of man, or to the external objects with which it is natural for him to express his internal sentiments.

✠ E. The service of God in religion, rendered by the

human body is called adoration. Then there are tithes and offerings, things which are offered in religion to God for the perfection and the continuance of His cult. All of these other acts are summed up and expressed in the ultimate and perfective act of religion, the act of sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> This is the act in which something is done to a thing offered to God in order to express in a perfect and unique manner the supreme excellence of God. The sacrifice, above all the other acts of religion, is a sign. Prayer and devotion constitute the "invisible sacrifice" of which the real or external sacrifice is the sensible symbol. It was for this reason that God, in the old law, did not look with favor upon some of the sacrifices of the people. They honored Him externally, but their hearts were far from Him. The sign which they made in sacrifice was empty and barren. The prayer and the devotion that sacrifice was supposed to symbolize were, in fact, nonexistent; the infinite wisdom of God was not deceived.

The truth about the interrelation of prayer and sacrifice is the key to the understanding of the Catholic religion as such, and consequently to the appreciation of the Christian life. A sacrifice, as we know from Catholic teaching, is a social act. As the perfect and supreme act of worship it is meant to express and to manifest the prayer and the devotion of the people. Naturally, then, an individual will partake of the fruit of the sacrifice more perfectly insofar as he prays more fervently and ardently. The Christian life, all of the worship of the society which is the mystical body of Christ the Lord, is summed up in the sacrifice of the Mass. The Christian people, the people of God, offer that sacrifice more perfectly insofar as their prayers are more perfect and efficacious.

It is not by any coincidence that the action which constitutes the sacrifice of the new law, the act "par excellence" of the Catholic Church, is placed in a background of prayer. An examination of the Roman Missal will show clearly that what the priest says at the Mass constitutes a continual prayer, a prayer into which the sacrificial act of the consecration is integrated. As we know, the essence of the sacrifice of the Mass consists formally in the consecration, and the communion is required for the perfection or the integrity of the act. But, from the earliest dawn of Catholic history the words of the consecration have been placed in this background of prayer. The ancient liturgical forms, some of which are given in contemporary books of spirituality, show this very clearly. The sacrifice is the expression ultimately of that prayer which forms its background. And conversely, the object and the motive of the sacrifice itself are contained and elaborated in the liturgical prayer. The sacrifice of the Mass is not meant to be independent of the prayer in which it is integrated.

✠ F. Catholic liturgical research makes it very clear that all the other liturgical prayers of the Church, those for example which are found in the breviary and in the ritual, center around this principal prayer of the Mass. They constitute an anticipation or a continuance of that prayer throughout the day, and an application to every condition of Christian life.<sup>5</sup> The reading of the breviary, the performance of that public prayer which is obligatory for clerics in major orders and for religious of solemn vows, has its solid foundation and its ultimate perfection in the prayer of the Mass, and must not be considered independently of the Mass. The acts expressed in this sacrifice, insofar as it is the sacrifice of the Church, con-

sist in the devotion and the prayer of the Church itself. The prayers of the breviary constitute the official expression of this prayer, and the means toward the perfection of this devotion. Our own participation in that sacrifice is proportionate to the intensity and the perfection of our own prayer.

Now, there is a special way in which prayer can be considered as the business of the Christian, the function which he is called upon to exercise by the very fact that he is a member of Christ, as we have seen, the prayer of Christians is something which is meant to be summed up and epitomized in the sacrifice of the Mass. But the Mass is the Eucharistic sacrifice, and the words of consecration, in which the essence of the sacrifice consists, formally constitute the very form of the sacrament. The sacrament of the Eucharist is the thing, or the act, to which the Christian is ordained by the very fact that he is a Christian. Baptism, the gateway to the other sacraments, is the rite which enables the person who receives it to make the other sacraments, and in particular the sacrament of the Eucharist, his own. And the reception of baptism is what constitutes us as Christians, as members of the visible society which is the mystical body of Christ in this world. Then, by the very fact that we are Christians, we are destined for that sacrifice which is meant to be the expression of our prayer and our devotion. The Eucharist becomes, as it were, our business by the fact that we are members of Christ, and the Eucharist demands and expresses the riches of Christian prayer.<sup>6</sup>

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## CHAPTER VII

### PRAYER TO GOD AND TO THE SAINTS

A. All prayer is addressed ultimately to God as to the One from whom we wish to receive the favors we ask.

B. We can pray to our Lord as God, or we can ask the favor of His prayer, which He performs as an act of His human nature. In order to obviate any misunderstanding the Church, in her public prayer, petitions Him as God.

C. Prayer to our Lady and the saints is a perpetual practice of the Catholic Church.

D. It is necessary to seek the intercession of our Lady and of the saints in order to take advantage of the aids God places at our disposal for the attainment of our salvation.

E. Prayer to our Lady has a special place in Christian life.

F. In praying to our Lady and the saints we give them the honor and veneration which God wills us to render them.

G. We do not pray to the souls in purgatory nor to the living.



✠ A. Since the definition of prayer is the petition of fitting things from God, it is obvious that prayer is prayer only insofar as it is addressed to God. But, at the same time there are many formulas in which we call upon our Blessed Lady and upon the saints of God to intercede for us, and these formulas are themselves expressions of Christian prayer. This aspect of Christian teaching is rendered intelligible when we consider the teaching on prayer in the light of the essential doctrine of the Church, and the inherently social character of man's supernatural life. For the Catholic Church is such that the petitions



which its children make to their God are, and ought to be, fortified by the intercession of those who have gone before us and have achieved the eternal reward which God keeps in store for those who have loved Him.

In the first place, it is obvious that there is one basic difference between the petition which we address to God, and the formula we use in addressing our fellows in the mystical body, the saints of God. We speak to God in prayer as to the One who is to grant our petitions.<sup>1</sup> The desire of Christian hope which we express to God in prayer is something which is to be fulfilled by Him alone. The object of all our prayer is ultimately God Himself, to be possessed and enjoyed in the eternal felicity of the beatific vision. That is a supernatural good, one which can be granted only by God Himself. All the power of all the creatures in the universe would never suffice to give it to us apart from God.

Likewise, prayer, as an act of religion, is an act which gives to God the service which is due to Him because of His supreme excellence. Obviously this service is something which is given to God alone. When we pray to the saints, we do not in any way offer them the honor that is given to God. The cult or service of God is something specific, something which is known by the name of *latria*. That which is given to the saints is of another type altogether.

✠ B. Since our Lord has two distinct natures, there are two distinct ways of praying to Him. As God, we pray to Him as the One whom we ask to fulfill the wish that we express in prayer. As God likewise we pay to Him the service and the honor of *latria*. But, since He is man, and since He has a human nature which He assumed in order to suffer and die for our sins, it would be per-

fectly possible to address our petitions to Him, and to ask His prayers for us. As a matter of fact, it is one of the teachings of divine revelation which the Catholic Church brings to us, that our Lord actually does intercede for us in heaven. We believe that His prayer for us will continue until the end of time. But, as a matter of policy and discipline, in order to obviate any misunderstanding which might possibly arise from such a course of action, we do not pray to Him in this way. We act thus in order to insist upon the truth of His divinity, in order not to lose sight of the fact that He who is the Head of the mystical body is in reality the living God.

In the official prayers of the Catholic Church it is most usual to address the petitions to the Father, through the Son and in the unity of the Holy Ghost. We are quite aware, of course, of the fact that the Three Divine Persons act together in the granting of our petition. They are not distinguished by any operation on creatures. But this formula of prayer is our expression of faith in the central and essential Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. It is only fitting that the prayer which is based upon Christian faith should manifest the central teaching of divine revelation.

✠ C. When we consider the matter of prayer to our Blessed Lady, to the angels, and to the saints, we could, if we wished, enter into the polemic side of the treatise. We could examine the teaching of the Church which shows that since the very beginning prayer to the departed heroes of the Church Militant has been a part of Catholic practice, and the legitimacy of such prayer an essential part of Catholic doctrine. But it is not the purpose of this treatise to deal with the polemic aspect of this question. It is sufficient for us to realize that the

Council of Trent taught the legitimacy and the utility of prayer to the saints, thus defining and confirming the age-old Catholic traditions in this regard.<sup>2</sup> It is our purpose here to examine the meaning and the implications of the fact that we can and should beg the saints of God to make intercession for us.

In the first place, the teaching that we can and should pray to the saints presupposes two other elements of Catholic doctrine, the teaching that the saints can, and actually do, intercede for us at the throne of God, and the fact that the saints can know of the petitions we make to them. The prayer of the saints themselves is the subject of a later chapter. We know that the saints know of our prayers to them by the fact that they enjoy the beatific vision, thereby possessing a happiness in which every legitimate desire is and must be fulfilled. The knowledge of the petitions that pertain to them is the object of a legitimate desire, and as such is something granted to the saints of God, constituting one secondary and accidental aspect of their beatitude.

There are two basic reasons why prayer to the saints is a fitting part of the activity of the Catholic. In the first place this activity on our part constitutes a practical recognition of the order that God has instituted in the world, and in the economy of the spiritual life, that arrangement whereby the higher things are to contribute in the government and the perfection of those which are in less exalted positions. Secondly it is the expression of the practical honor and recognition which God desires us to render to the saints as the heroes of the supernatural order.

✠ D. Prayer to the saints is practically obligatory, an act which has its own necessity in the spiritual life. The

saints are constituted as superior to us, in a position to help us, and God wishes us to take practical cognizance of this fact. They are superior to us in their own order, having arrived at the term of that life of habitual grace which we are to live here on earth as a preparation for the life of heaven. This does not mean, of course, that every saint in heaven has a degree of charity superior to every person in the state of grace here on earth. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. It is perfectly possible for a soul here on earth to have a grade of habitual grace higher and more intense than that enjoyed by some of the souls actually in heaven. But the state or the condition of these souls is definitely superior to ours. They actually possess the infinite Good toward which we tend in this world. Thus they are in a position to be of assistance to us. God wills that we should take practical cognizance of this fact by calling upon them to aid us. We are bound to them by the ties of charity, the love which unites us to God and to all of those who are called upon to be the children and the friends of God. And the same charity which impels them to love God and to love us, will make it possible for us to approach them.

Joseph a Spiritu Sancto expresses the common teaching of the Catholic Church when he tells us that it is obligatory for all, even those constituted in the highest dignity or the highest perfection to pray to the saints here on earth.<sup>3</sup> Sylvius explains this obligation by stating that we are bound by a natural law to observe and utilize the order which God has instituted in the world.<sup>4</sup> The affair of our salvation is not merely an individual concern. It is an operation in which the entire Church of God, the mystical body of Christ, is meant to take part, each group within that body contributing according to its place and



influence. The saints in heaven are meant to be active causes of our attainment of eternal life. And God has ordered that we should have recourse to them and implore their aid.

Sylvius adds the illuminating note that our need is so great that we have no choice other than to have recourse to the means which God has placed at our disposal.<sup>5</sup> This necessity for applying to the saints for aid is a means which God has given us for realizing in a practical manner the seriousness of our situation. We live on this earth for a few years. In that time our place for all eternity is decided. The forces of evil, the spirits who have fallen from grace, are arrayed against us. The world in which we live constitutes a serious obstacle to the achievement of our eternal happiness. Our own natures, damaged by original sin, weigh us down and tend against the accomplishment of our salvation. God offers us His grace, sufficient for our needs, but such is our position that it would be criminally foolish for us to neglect any of the agencies He offers us for the attainment of our ultimate end.

In the last analysis, just as prayer to God renders the soul apt and disposed to receive the graces and favors which God wills to give it as the effect of prayer, so our prayer to the saints renders us fitted to receive these gifts. By praying to the saints we exercise and realize the life of grace which God has given us, and we give a practical, vital manifestation of the humility, respect, love, and dependence which God wills us to have toward these citizens of heaven.

✠ E. The obligation to have recourse to the saints is evidently of particular importance with regard to prayer to our Blessed Lady. Because of her special place in the



scheme of salvation, recourse to her is particularly necessary. It is Catholic doctrine that Mary is the mediatrix of all graces. No favor in the supernatural order comes to us independently of her. The constant tradition of the Catholic Church testifies to the necessity of our appealing to her prayers. It is strictly possible for a person to achieve salvation without praying to our Blessed Lady. But, for those who are cognizant of her place, and her dignity in the scheme of salvation, neglect to pray to her would be a serious neglect of a magnificent aid to salvation. It would imply a carelessness about the affair of salvation that could hardly be less than fatal.

Since the position of our Blessed Lady in the economy of salvation is quite unique, there is no other individual saint to whom recourse is as necessary as is prayer to her. St. Joseph and St. Michael the Archangel are patrons of the universal Church, and as such the Church as a whole prays for their protection. Individual members of the Church are urged to have recourse to them, but there is no absolute necessity of such prayer on the part of each individual. The necessity for praying to the saints is indefinite, as to its objects, except in the case of our Blessed Mother. As a matter of fact, however, the catalogue of saints is so extended as to include individuals of nearly every race and walk of life, individuals to whom the faithful as individuals, and the Church as an organization, pray. And, in time of any serious difficulty it is customary to invoke the intercession of those saints which have had similar experiences during the course of their lives in this world.

✠ F. The prayer which we make to the saints, or to be more exact, the petitions which we make to God to be fulfilled by Him because of the intercession of the saints

which we ask in prayer, is meant to be not only an act which contributes to the achievement of our salvation, but an operation in which we express the love and respect which God wills us to have for those who have so lived and died as to be with Him in heaven forever. The love which binds us together as members of the Church is a love which extends itself to the saints, the citizens par excellence of the kingdom of heaven. That love for them is a love of benevolence, a love in which we wish them to have the honor and the respect which they deserve. We give them that honor and respect when we pray to them, and ask the favor of their intercession with God.

The honor that is due to the saints is a practical recognition of their excellence and their dignity. That recognition is practical and vital when we ask their intercession, and acknowledge, by striving to avail ourselves of it, their influence at the throne of God. They are our fellow citizens. Our own homeland is, in the final analysis, that same heaven in which they dwell, and are to dwell forever. We show ourselves appreciative of the excellence of these, our triumphant brothers and sisters in Christ, by invoking their aid on our journey home.

✠ G. With the recognition of the saints in heaven the list of those to whom we are to pray is closed. It is the more common teaching of the theologians that we are not to invoke the aid of the souls in purgatory. The most cogent reason for that assertion is to be found in the practice of the Church itself. The prayer of the Church, based and modeled upon the Lord's prayer, and expressed in the formulas of the sacred liturgy makes no mention of any appeal for prayers to the souls in purgatory. It is understood, at least tacitly, in these official prayer formulas that, in the mysterious designs of God's

providence these souls are in such a condition that it is our duty and our privilege to pray *for* them rather than *to* them.<sup>6</sup>

There are two reasons which actuate the more conservative and probable teaching that we are not to pray to the souls in purgatory. The first is the fact that we have no certain guarantee that they would know of the existence of any petitions which we would make to them. The second, and by far the more important, is the probability that the souls in purgatory, because of their condition, do not exercise the active causality of prayer at all. This second reason will be the subject of a special chapter in this book.

However, it is well to note that the possibility of our praying to the souls in purgatory hardly enters into the field of theology, strictly so called. Theology is the science in which men examine the implications and the virtualities of the revelation which God has given to the world, and which the Catholic Church, the mystical body of Christ, proposes as revealed by God. That science exists, not for the sake of the conclusions which it draws, but for the sake of contributing toward a more perfect appreciation of the content of revelation, to which we assent by faith. Theological conclusions, then, are those statements which are seen as contained virtually in the datum of faith itself. They are not merely statements which are in harmony with the content of Christian doctrine. They must be statements illuminative of the very teaching which God has given, and which the Church offers to men.

Examining the question of prayer to the souls in purgatory in the light of this norm, we find that the fact that such teaching is authorized in the actual content of

divine revelation which was closed with the death of the last Apostle is never claimed, even by those who hold that we can and should pray to the holy souls. The arguments which are adduced in favor of such prayer are always those which are meant to show that this practice is not incompatible with the actual Catholic doctrine on purgatory. Such conclusions, even if they were justified, would be only the extrinsic virtualities spoken of by the theologians. They do not belong to the actual fabric of theology, and they could never be endowed with proper theological certitude.

There is only one more point to be considered in treating of those to whom prayer is made. We do not pray to people who are still living, even though those people are authentically saints. We are expected to ask prayers from one another, and in this way to acknowledge practically the corporate character of our struggle for sanctification. But we are definitely not expected, as St. John Chrysostom remarked rather dryly, to ask the prayers of our fellow Christians with the object of exempting ourselves from the work of prayer.<sup>7</sup>

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE THINGS FOR WHICH WE PRAY

A. That which we seek ultimately to acquire in prayer is the glory of God, to be realized in our eternal possession of Him in the beatific vision.

B. Every other thing for which we ask in prayer is ordered to the attainment of this ultimate end.

C. It is fitting that we should ask for specific favors in prayer.

D. Some specific benefits are to be asked for unconditionally, because they cannot be other than helpful in the attainment of our salvation.

E. Among these benefits we count the growth in the life of grace.

F. Some specific benefits must be asked for conditionally, that is, in the measure in which they would be conducive to the attainment of our ultimate end.



✕ A. Catholic teaching is quite explicit about the things for which we ask God in the act of prayer. The object we seek in Christian prayer is precisely that which we hope to obtain from God. That which we are confident that God is willing and able to give us is the object of our prayer to Him. The hope we have for these things is dominated and inspired by Christian charity, it is a hope which we entertain and upon which we act because we love God.

Seen in that light, there is one ultimate objective which we seek in prayer, one good which we desire and for which we ask, one good which is fitting, and in func-



tion of which other things can enter into the object of prayer. That object is the glory of God. But it is the glory of God, looked upon, not as an abstract and remote consideration, but precisely as God wills to be glorified in us and through us. It is the glory of God to be procured in the accomplishment of our salvation, the glory of God which is found in our possession and enjoyment of God in the eternal splendor of the beatific vision.

The Object for which we ask ultimately, and for the sake of which we ask everything else that ever enters into real Christian prayer is God Himself.<sup>1</sup> The object of prayer, the Object of hope, is at the same time the only Object of man's final beatitude. This Object is something about which man is not expected to be at all indifferent. We are expected to desire it, to hope for it, and to work for it. God does not command that He be glorified by us in any other way than by the achievement of our salvation.

It is well for us not to lose sight of the fact that the glory of God, which we desire by the fact that we love Him, is not separated in the practical order from the affair of our salvation. Forgetfulness of this fundamental truth is sometimes prone to engender a certain listless melancholy in the place of the vigorous spirituality which belongs to the child of God. The love of God is a burning and ardent thing precisely because it is the force which moves and lifts us to labor for His glory and at the same time to work for our own perfection and salvation. Negligence or indifference about the affair of our own spiritual well-being is by that very fact carelessness in the matter of God's glory.

Objectively, of course, what we seek in prayer is God Himself. He is our last end, the One in whom we find

our perfect and ultimate beatitude. Formally we ask for the possession of God, the possession in which we have God as our own by seeing Him face to face. That possession of God, in a manner which is not due to any creature and which God in His mercy has granted to those whom He has called to live the life of His adopted children, is the beatific vision.

✠ B. Now, everything we ask from God in prayer presupposes that object. Whatever else we desire, we wish because it is supposed to aid us in our progress toward this ultimate and supernatural end. Otherwise, it would not be "fitting." The petition of a thing which would not be conducive to salvation, and which was known to be such, would, of course, not be prayer. Every portion of that definition is essential. Prayer is not merely a petition made to God. It is necessarily the petition of fitting things from God. And obviously a thing is fitting as the object of a petition made to God only if it constitutes the ultimate end of man, or if it is conducive to that end. Nothing in all this universe is worth asking from God except insofar as it would aid us in attaining salvation.

There are two ways in which things can be hoped or petitioned from God. They can be considered in general, insofar as they are what God wishes us to have. Or they can be looked upon as individual benefits. We consider the object of prayer in this first sense when we ask God to do what He wills with us and for us. We may ask Him to give us the good things which He wills us to have, and to be relieved of the sorrows which He wishes to take away from us. This type of prayer is good, but it is not meant to do away with the type in which we ask God for certain definite favors. It is very definitely meant for man to pray for particular and individual benefits.

✠ C. The reason why prayer for definite objects is good is that it is a proper and worthy expression of Christian hope. The revelation of God, which the Catholic Church proposes to us and which we accept on divine faith, points out to us that there are certain things which we are supposed to desire definitely, because we know that God wills that we should possess them. These objects include not only our ultimate object, God Himself, but everything else which is bound to contribute to the attainment of that object. We can also seek and pray for other things, things which of themselves might help us, but at the same time might also hinder us in the work of our salvation. There is obviously a different manner for petitioning objects which belong to these two classes.

A prayer that was merely indefinite, that which was not directed toward the acquisition of some particular object would not be at all indicative of the average person's hope. We desire certain definite favors for ourselves and for others. It is only fitting that we petition God for them as we desire them. Asking for these favors definitely and by name has the effect of rendering us more perfectly cognizant of the end which we are striving to achieve, and more perfectly disposed to work in the direction of the favors we ask. Petition for definite favors will naturally tend to increase the definite direction of the spiritual life. Definiteness is an essential condition of that practicality with which our prayer and our supernatural life as a whole must be endowed. We strive definitely for certain goods. If our activity is at all worth while, it is not simply directed toward the accomplishment of good in general.

✠ D. We petition definitely and unconditionally for those benefits which we know from divine revelation

cannot be other than conducive to the end of eternal life for which we work and pray. These gifts obviously include the life of habitual grace with all that is implied or contained in that life. If we are in the state of mortal sin, we ask for the grace of conversion or penance, because there is no forgiveness of sin and no re-establishment in the life of grace without that penance. If we are in the state of grace, we ask for perseverance in it. We ask to be kept from sin, which alone is disruptive of that life. We ask definitely and unconditionally for the virtues which form the organism of habitual grace, for their increase in perfection and intensity. These virtues include, of course, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and the infused or supernatural moral virtues, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, and all that panoply of habits which the theologians group around these four. We ask unconditionally again for the grace to be able to perform the acts of these virtues, and for virtuous activity itself. All these things we ask for definitely and unconditionally because we know that they cannot have a bad effect. None of these things can be disadvantageous to us in the work of our salvation.

It is important for us to note that the power to perform the virtuous acts by which we are to merit our salvation, and the performance of those same acts fall within the province of prayer and hope. Some of the liturgical prayers petition God for the power to perform certain salutary actions. "Hear, O Lord, we beseech Thee, of Thy heavenly goodness, the prayers of Thy suppliant people: that they may both perceive what they ought to do, and may have strength to fulfill the same," is the Collect for the Sunday within the octave of the Epiphany. Other such prayers beseech the direction of God in our



hearts and lives, as the secret prayer for the fifth Sunday after the Epiphany. "We offer Thee, O Lord, the sacrifice of propitiation: that Thou mayest mercifully absolve us from our sins, and mayest deign Thyself to direct our inconstant hearts." The Collect for the fifth Sunday after Easter is a prayer in which we ask definitely for meritorious activity as a favor which God can give us, and which we would not be able to procure for ourselves, "O God, from whom all good things come; grant to us Thy suppliants that by Thy inspiration we may think what is right, and under Thy guidance carry out the same."

We have the privilege of petitioning for this meritorious activity in prayer since we know that prayer is necessary for the living of the Christian life and for the avoidance of sin over any considerable period of time, and in the face of serious temptations. The fact that such activity, and not merely the power to perform it, is the object of the prayer of the Church itself is indicative of the necessity and the importance of prayer. For, by the very fact that prayer is a petition, we do not ask for that which is in our power to obtain without this recourse to our God. Meritorious activity and perseverance in the fullness of the life of grace constitute goods which are absolutely essential for the attainment of our eternal beatitude, and are gifts which we shall not obtain otherwise than through the agency of prayer.

✠ E. We pray, also, unconditionally and by name for growth in the life of grace. This advance in Christian perfection is something which we can merit, and which, as a matter of fact, we actually merit by every act performed in the state of grace under at least the virtual influence of charity. But it is at the same time a favor which God will not give to us without the power of prayer. The



same charity which motivates and causes the merit inspires the activity of prayer in the same direction.

However, this prayer for increase in Christian perfection must take cognizance of the theology of the spiritual life. In the actual designs of divine providence, there is a well-marked path of activity for the soul which progresses in the life of grace. The act which constitutes a soul as perfect, and which communicates perfection to all the other operations which it performs, is the act of charity. The means of perfection is always the way of prayer, the petition of fitting things from God, and this prayer is always accompanied by a certain purification in which the soul is progressively cleansed of the irregularities and stains which have come from original sin and from the actual sins which it may have committed.

However, the condition of the soul in the first phase of the advance to perfection is different from the condition of that same soul after it has passed this first phase. During the first portion of this advance the soul is expected to utilize the full resources of its human powers in the work of prayer and in the task of purification. The soul applies itself to prayer in the way of methodical and discursive meditation, throwing all the force of human reasoning and of the human mind into the work of increasing the perfection of the petitions which it makes to God. At the same time, methodically and seriously it begins the work of active mortification.

As time goes on, the intellectual activity of prayer reaches its term with the acquisition of that practical appreciation of God toward the acquisition of which the methodical meditation was directed. The soul enjoys affective prayer, then the prayer of recollection. At the same time God takes a hand, and the soul passes through

a purification which God Himself gives to it, the passive purification of the senses.

Finally the soul is gifted with the prayer of quietude, and then the prayer of union, thus entering into and enjoying the contemplation which God desires to give ordinarily to souls who have advanced to any considerable stage of perfection in this world. In the line of purification, the soul itself is purified by God in passing through the arduous way of the dark night of the soul.

Catholic tradition in the theology of the spiritual life has assigned the name *via purgativa* to the first of these stages in the climb to perfection. The second is called the *via illuminativa*, and the third is known as the *via unitiva*. The point of this matter is that we are not to ask for the graces which are proper to the highest stages of perfection except insofar as we wish to receive them in working through the lower stages. It would be presumptuous and foolish to pray for the favors of contemplation until we were willing and able to apply ourselves to the work of prayer, and devote every human means at our command to perfecting it. It would be presumptuous to ask for the consolations which fill the hearts of the persons who enjoy the prayer of union except insofar as we were willing to, and desirous of, mortifying ourselves and submitting ourselves to the purifying hand of God at the moment. The favors of the spiritual life should be asked in their proper order.

✠ F. Finally, of course, there are certain favors which we ask for directly and particularly, but which we petition conditionally, under the condition that this thing should be conducive to the glory of God and the salvation of our souls. These are the things which might be useful to us, and might also be detrimental to the affair

of our salvation. In other words, the things for which we are to pray conditionally are those things which are not necessarily ordered to the salvation of the individual. In this category, of course, all temporal goods are to be found. But there are certain spiritual goods, like the priesthood itself, and certain extraordinary favors in the spiritual life, which are ordered for the life of the Church as a whole, rather than for the perfection of the individual. We can consider these briefly, leaving the treatment of prayer for temporal objects for a separate chapter.

It is a part of Catholic doctrine that the priesthood is ordered immediately to the perfection of the Church itself. The Church could not exist without the priesthood for the simple reason that the eucharistic sacrifice, which is the act of the Church, demands the activity of one who possesses the priesthood. The Church could not exist apart from its proper operation.

Likewise the abundance and the continuance of candidates for the priesthood, always a fundamental concern of the Church, is recognized by the Church as a favor which is to be procured through the agency of prayer. This prayer for the continuance of the priesthood on this earth is naturally a prayer which is said absolutely, and without any condition. As such it is a prayer of the Catholic Church itself.

However, the priesthood, considered with reference to one particular individual, is a different case altogether. The priesthood is not a necessary grace for the individual as it is for the Church as a whole. It is a favor which God gives freely to this particular individual. It is an office which, while it brings one intimately close to God, may still be abused and neglected. In other words, although

it is possible that the priest may come close to God through his sublime dignity, it is also possible for a man to use the power of the priesthood in such a way as to ruin his soul for all eternity. Naturally such neglect is an abuse, a perversion, of the priesthood. It is not frequent, but it is possible. And, because it is possible, because the priesthood is not one of those blessings which, like the life of grace, the virtues, and the acts of the virtues, cannot be detrimental to the salvation of the individual, the candidate for the priesthood prays for the grace of holy orders under the condition, "if it is in accordance with the will of God, and if it is conducive to my own salvation."

No man has, as such, a strict right to the priesthood. No injustice is done to a man whom a bishop refuses to ordain. The work of the priesthood is the work of the Catholic Church, the mystical body of Christ, as an organization. Consequently the grace of the priesthood is something to be prayed for unconditionally as far as the Church itself is concerned. Since it is not a necessary means of individual sanctification, and since it is not something which can have no result other than good in the eternal destiny of the one who is a priest, the priesthood is sought for the individual under the condition that it is pleasing to God, and favorable to this man's salvation that he should live and work as a priest of God.

However, we must not allow ourselves to overlook the fact that prayer for those things which should be asked for only under the condition that the granting of the favor sought should be conducive to our own salvation is something praiseworthy and good. Obviously it is a good thing for a boy to desire the priesthood, when he wishes to advance the work of the Church and the glory

of God through the work of the priesthood. Likewise this prayer is necessary for the attainment of certain goods, in the sense that these goods will not be granted except in answer to prayer.

The case of the priesthood is one in point. The successful preparation for the priesthood is something which demands prayer on the part of the candidate, and a man will live so as to exercise the virtues and the influence of the priesthood only insofar as he is joined to God in prayer. Prayer is a cause, and a necessary cause, even of those goods which we seek from God by a petition that is conditional. And prayer is good and praiseworthy insofar as it proceeds from and expresses a sincere love of God.



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## CHAPTER IX

### PRAYER FOR TEMPORAL THINGS

A. It is licit and necessary to pray for temporal goods, benefits of the natural order.

B. Prayer does not seek temporal favors for their own sake.

C. Prayer for specific temporal benefits is fitting and desirable.

D. Temporal goods are always to be petitioned conditionally, because they can be disadvantageous in the affair of salvation.

E. Temporal goods are to be asked in moderation.

F. The removal or avoidance of temporal evil can and should be the object of prayer.

G. Prayer cannot seek moral evil in any way, but it can seek physical evil indirectly.



✠ A. In studying the things for which we can and should pray, the question of temporal goods deserves a special consideration. We call those things temporal goods which are of themselves primarily and immediately ordered to the perfection of man's natural life, and through this natural life to the ultimate perfection of man's salvation. In this class will be found, of course, food, shelter, clothing, and all the material goods which man needs in order to live a human life according to the accepted standards. Naturally the money which is the medium of exchange by which these things can be procured, and the work, or the resources required for earning the money or producing these material goods enter into this category. So, too, immediate success in whatever walk of life a man

has chosen (always providing, of course, that this occupation is legitimate) can be counted as a material good. Health of mind and body, and all the complexus of subordinate goods necessary to produce and to sustain these, count among the material goods. So also do the social position and the responsibilities of the individual, and the goods which are needed to keep up a man's position.

It must be stressed that material things are by no means the only factors which can be counted among these temporal goods, insofar as these are considered as constituting the object of prayer. The grasp of a science is not a material thing, but it is a temporal advantage to persons who are engaged in certain types of work. Ability to reason, again, is something which may be considered as contributing to a man's success and to his ability to live according to a human standard. In short, all the intellectual and cultural accomplishments which man uses for his own legitimate advancement and for the performance of the work from which he derives his livelihood or his recreation enter into the category of temporal goods.

These temporal goods are legitimately the object of prayer.<sup>1</sup> A man is expected to ask for them, and as a matter of fact prayer is a necessary agency for the acquisition of some of them. There are some of these gifts which God grants to man in answer to man's petition, and which He would not concede except in answer to that petition. That is the common Catholic doctrine, abundantly illustrated by the teaching of Sacred Scriptures and the history of the Church. It is legitimate and permissible to pray for goods which can and may be the object of desire. And certainly temporal goods are legitimately the object of the desire and the hope of the

Christian. He works and expends his labor for the immediate purpose of possessing these goods. And it is only fitting that he should call upon God to grant them to Him in answer to his prayer, and thus use these very gifts of God as instruments by which to serve Him.

✠ B. At the same time Catholic teaching is absolutely firm on one fundamental point. We are not to desire or to pray for these temporal goods as ends in themselves. We are not to set our hearts upon them, and to consider them as goods, in the possession of which we can find an ultimate happiness. They must be referred, and practically referred, to the one ultimate end and destiny of man, the fullness of the supernatural life.

The teaching of Christ and of His Church gives the Catholic an objective appreciation of the world. Enlightened by that teaching, the follower of Christ sees this world, and all the goods which enter into the perfection of this life as goods which are ordered ultimately to contribute to the accomplishment of man's salvation. To use the things of this world otherwise, or to desire them for their own sake, independently of any ordination to God is to abuse them and in a certain sense to frustrate the purpose for which they were placed in the world. To ask for these temporal things apart from any ordering of these things to God would not be prayer; it would not be the petition of fitting things from God.

✠ C. We can ask for temporal things either in general or specifically and individually. We pray for them in a general way when we beg God to grant us what we need for a sufficiency of life, in order to serve Him. That sort of prayer is common in the Christian liturgy. It has the distinct advantage of allowing us to keep in mind clearly the end and purpose of the temporal things we desire.

At the same time it is permissible and laudable to pray for these things specifically, to ask for this particular temporal favor, but always under the condition that we desire this good only if it is really conducive to our salvation. It is to our advantage to pray for particular temporal goods under this condition, because we actually work for and desire individual things, and it is only proper that our life of prayer should be in line with the course of our activity. Prayer is not meant to be a sort of rarified activity, in which we petition something that has little to do with the ordinary course and objective of our activity. What we seek in prayer is ultimately that which we try to acquire in the acts which go to make up the ordinary course of our lives. The favors which God grants to us in prayer are ordered to the same end as those things which we acquire in our lives of toil, the eternal life with God in heaven. When we pray for that object which we hope at the same time to possess through the exercise of our own activity, we are sanctifying and directing that activity in the light of faith. It is certainly not a mark of perfection to neglect prayer for the individual temporal things which we desire.

St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes two reasons why these material things enter into the object of prayer. First, they are necessary to sustain the natural life of man, and second, they are supposed to serve as instruments of the supernatural and Christian virtues. According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, the natural and earthly life of a man is in reality the preparation of one who has been called to be a fellow citizen of the saints, a citizen of the eternal city of God. The life that these earthly things are supposed to sustain and perfect is the life of a man who lives with the life of habitual

grace. By sustaining that life, these earthly things fulfill their part in the plan of God's providence, and glorify God.

These temporal goods enter into the economy of the supernatural life even more intimately when they are desired and prayed for to the end that they may be instrumental in the operation of the virtues. It is perfectly possible for a man to desire material goods in order that he may give alms, and may be of material assistance to the work of the Church. It is perfectly possible for a man to wish and pray for talent, or for the grasp of an art or a science, in order that he may expend his energy thereby for the glory of God and the triumph of His city.

✠ D. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that these same material goods, and even the intellectual attainments, may be harmful. In dealing with the spiritual life and the theology of prayer we must not allow ourselves to forget the all-important fact of original sin. If it is decreed by God that we should live our lives in this world by using temporal goods, we also achieve the salvation for which we work and pray by being purified of any improper attachment to these goods. For the life which we lead in the supernatural order is not merely the life of habitual grace. It is the life of the grace of Christ. It is a life which we have through the bitter passion of our Lord Himself. In living that life, the Saviour who carried His cross to Calvary is our Model. It is a life of prayer, and a life which affords a supernatural happiness, but in this world it is also a life of suffering and mortification. The things of this world are expected to chastise us, as well as to sustain our natural lives. They serve us instrumentally in the cause of virtue when we are ready to submit our will to God's will.



There will be then some goods which we shall work and pray to acquire, and which God will not allow us to have precisely because He loves us, and in His infinite wisdom He knows that being deprived of this particular good is to our eternal advantage. To be a prayer in the strict sense of the term, a petition has to be made to God for temporal things with that condition in mind. We must realize that we are making a petition which God will either grant or withhold as a manifestation of His love for us. If He does not give the temporal favor which we have asked of Him, it is because He knows that we can attain our salvation and advance in grace without the things we have sought, and He, in His love for us, wills that we should do so. If He grants this favor, He gives us something which we are to utilize in such a way that it is instrumental in the attainment of our eternal happiness and our advance in the life of grace.

✠ E. Naturally, the temporal goods we ask of God in prayer under the condition that they should be valuable for the attainment of our eternal and supernatural destiny, are to be sought in moderation. That is to say, the amount and the intensity of the thing sought is to be evaluated in terms of the ultimate object to which it is subordinated. The rule in determining these objects is the rule of Christian faith rather than that of emotion.

✠ F. This same rule holds true in prayer which we offer to God in order that we may be relieved from some temporal evil. Just as prayer to be forgiven for the sin we have committed is, in the last analysis, a prayer for the grace of God and, as such, a prayer for something which cannot be other than good for us in the accomplishment of our salvation, so prayer to be relieved or preserved from temporal evils is a petition for the temporal good

of which the evil is a privation. Such prayer is governed by the laws which deal with prayer for temporal goods. We can and should pray to be freed from suffering and sickness, yet with the understanding that this suffering or sickness may be something which God wishes us to endure for His sake, and thus to advance in His love. Hence, we wish to be preserved or freed from these evils if such is the will of God in our regard. Otherwise we are willing to bear with them. This condition is so essential to prayer that without it our act would not be a petition of fitting things from God.

War, pestilence, and famine are among the evils which we pray to have averted in this way, and under this condition. In this case it is important for us to remember that the magnitude of a physical or temporal evil in no way places it outside of that class, and in no way exempts prayer to have that evil averted from the condition of which we have spoken. War, for example, is a horrible thing, one of the greatest scourges that can afflict mankind. Yet there is such a thing as a just war. The fact that the weapons of war have been perfected in a frightful way in no way changes the essence of war. And God can allow His people to suffer from even an unjust war in such a way as to have the endurance of that evil a means for their salvation and perfection.

✠ G. Moral evil can in no way be the object of prayer. It would certainly not be a fitting thing to petition from God. Under a certain aspect, however, physical or temporal evil can be sought. A person could, and some saints actually do pray that they may have the privilege of undergoing some suffering for the sake of Christ. That in itself, of course, is most laudable. To a certain extent, when the Church prays that the machinations of her

enemies may be brought to nothing, she asks for their discomfiture, and so for something which they would regard as a physical evil. She prayed that the forces of the infidels would be defeated in the great days of the Crusades, when she prayed that the men who were fighting for the Christian cause would be victorious.

The Church does not pray for the death of any person. Such petition would be adverse to the intention for which she was instituted by Christ. Her children are expected to follow her example. In any case, it is utterly wrong to wish, or to petition God, for some temporal evil to fall upon some person because of one's animosity against that person. A petition is anything but prayer if it is directed to the end of hatred. In the last analysis, the object of prayer is the object of Christian hope, and of a hope which is inspired and governed by charity.

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## CHAPTER X

### THE BENEFICIARIES OF PRAYER

- A. God is in no way a beneficiary of prayer.
- B. Prayer is not meant to add anything to the happiness of the souls in heaven.
- C. The souls in purgatory can and should be benefited by prayer in receiving through it the alleviation of their sufferings and admission into the court of heaven.
- D. All the aid which we tender to the souls in purgatory comes to them by way of prayer.
- E. Prayer offered for one individual soul is of special benefit to that soul.
- F. Prayer is ordered to procure benefits for the living.
- G. Those in the state of grace can be helped by our prayer.
- H. We should pray also for those not in the state of grace, and for those who have not the gift of faith.
- I. We must pray for all those intimately connected with us in the bonds of charity, especially for the rulers of the Church and of the State.
- J. The supreme pontiff uses the prayer of Christians as a force at his disposal for the protection and the benefit of the Church.
- K. The charity which we have for the Church demands that we should pray for our bishops.
- L. Prayer is a civic function, of particular value in a democratic state.
- M. Prayer can and should be said for all legitimate societies.



✘ A. The determining factor in the object of Christian prayer is charity, the supernatural love of friendship and benevolence for God. All of those who are included within the object of charity enter into the object of

prayer itself, in the function that is proportioned to their position in the supernatural order. We pray to God as to the One who will grant the petitions we make to Him. We ask the intercession of the saints in heaven, that our prayers may be strengthened and rendered more efficacious by the aid which they can give us before the throne of God. We pray for ourselves and the souls in purgatory, and for all of the living who in the goodness of God are given grace and power sufficient to bring them to eternal happiness.

With regard to the place of God in prayer, we must remember that we do not pray that any benefit should accrue to Him through our petition. His infinite happiness is such that it could not possibly be increased, because it consists in the perfect and eternal possession of all Good. When we pray for the glory of God, that His name should be known and honored among men, the benefit that is petitioned is one which accrues to men themselves. For God is glorified when His name is known and loved, and in the loving knowledge of God men possess the happiness for which they seek. God acts on His creatures, not to acquire any benefit from them, but through His infinite mercy to communicate His goodness and perfection to them.

✠ B. The blessed in heaven receive no essential or primary benefit through our prayers. We do not pray for them, but to them, imploring the aid of their intercession before the throne of God. As a matter of fact, the Church has always studiously refrained from praying for the martyrs or for any of her children whom she knows to be in the presence of God. Such prayer would be contrary to the very direction of Catholic teaching, since the beatitude the saints enjoy, consisting as it does pri-



marily and essentially in the possession of God in the beatific vision, is something which they do not enjoy as the result of any prayer we could say for them now. The causality of prayer is not meant to be exercised in that direction.

There is something which we can procure by the power of our prayers. That is the recognition and the honor of the saints among men. But again, in this case the benefit is ultimately that of men, who by honoring the saints whom God wishes to have honored, procure able advocates in the court of God Himself. The full recognition of the goodness of the saints is something that will be revealed at the day of judgment, and the satisfaction thereby derived will be only secondary and accidental to the happiness of the saints themselves. By the very fact that they are saints, those whose actions were motivated by the love of charity, they were and are concerned with God.

✠ C. As members of the Catholic Church, the mystical body of Christ, we should pray for the souls in purgatory. They are constituted in such a state that they can benefit from our petitions. The structure of the mystical body is such that we should exercise the causality of prayer in their behalf. They have a special call upon our help. We are bound to them, and they to us, in the union of charity. In other words, we love them, as they love us with that love of benevolence which is immediately and necessarily consequent upon the love of God for His own sake. That love is necessarily active. It drives the person who possesses it to do what is in his power to bring about the good which he wishes for the object of his love.

The souls in purgatory are in the position of not being able to exercise the active causality for the end of

charity. They are not in a position to co-operate in bringing about the effect that they wish because they have charity. The reason is that the state in which they find themselves is one which has nothing to do with charity. They are being punished for actual sin. The cause of that state is in the last analysis, an act, or a series of acts at least not motivated by charity. Thus, although at present they have charity, and will have it for all eternity, as long as they are expiating acts which were at least independent of charity, they are not in a position to exercise the causality of the love of God.

We are in a position to place that active causality in motion, and to use it to the advantage of these, our brothers in Christ, who are temporarily unable to exercise it in their own behalf. For this reason the charity which we have for them impels us to pray for them, and thus prayer for the souls in purgatory, under its most general aspects at least, is necessary and obligatory for the Catholic, as being a necessary implication of charity. Prayer for the souls in purgatory, on our part and on the part of the blessed in heaven, is an integral part of the activity of the mystical body of Christ.

There is one and only one favor which we can obtain by our prayers for the souls in purgatory, a favor which God wills that they should have as the result of our petitions in their behalf. That is the amelioration of their condition, by the lessening of the punishments they suffer, and the anticipation of their entry into heaven. Our prayers are not ordered to be of assistance to them in increasing the intensity and the perfection of their charity. Their status in the supernatural life, the degree of their charity is fixed forever with death. Progress in the spiritual life is a law of that life in this world — not

in the next. Neither can we help them to avoid sin. By their very status, they are so constituted as to be incapable of ever sinning again. They do not stand in need of any material assistance, as do the children of God in this world. The one favor we can and should procure for them is the hastening of the day of their attainment of the beatific vision.

¶ D. All the assistance which we bring to the souls in purgatory comes to them by way of prayer. That assistance can be the power of prayer itself. We can and should ask God to have mercy on these souls and admit them to the happiness they desire. In this case the effect is attributable to our prayer as such. However, there are other acts which have a satisfactory value, and which we can perform in such a way as to apply their satisfactory value to the souls in purgatory. Any good act which is performed out of the love of God, and to which some difficulty is attached is considered as penal or satisfactory in this sense. St. Thomas makes special reference to two of those acts which proceed most immediately from that charity by which we are united to the souls in purgatory. These acts are the Eucharistic Sacrifice itself and almsgiving.<sup>1</sup>

In the same manner indulgences can be gained for the souls in purgatory. In these indulgences the Church places at our disposal the treasure of superabundant satisfaction pertaining to the activity of our Lord and of the saints. But, in any event, we apply these satisfactions to the souls in purgatory through the medium of prayer. We beg God to accept them, and to apply them, as it were, to the account of the souls of those for whom we pray. Thus the aid we give to the souls in purgatory is itself a prayer, or is at least applied to them by our own

prayer. For when we ask God to apply these satisfactions to the souls in purgatory for whom we intend them, we obviously make a petition of fitting things to God.

✠ E. There is one aspect of this teaching about prayer for the souls in purgatory about which error has been taught and condemned. It is the fact that we can pray for one particular soul, and that the prayer thus said is of special value to this one soul, and is of profit to him above and beyond any of the other souls in purgatory. The proposition of the heretic Wyklif, to the effect that "special prayers, applied to one person by prelates or religious profit that person no more than general prayers, all else being equal"<sup>2</sup> was condemned by Pope Martin V in the Council of Constance. The favor that is asked is actually given to the one for whom it is intended. If the prayer is said for several persons in purgatory, the effect for each of them is correspondingly less than if that same prayer had been said for one alone. This is true even in those prayers in which the satisfactory value of the sacrifice of the Mass is applied to the soul of some particular person. For, although the value of the Mass, as a sacrifice of which our Lord is Himself the High Priest and the Victim, is of Itself infinite, the satisfactory effects derived from it by any individual and applicable to the souls in purgatory are definitely limited in the decrees of the divine providence. Thus, in the order of God's justice, the satisfactory value is either divided among several souls, or applied in its entirety to one soul, depending upon the intention of the one praying.

There is one attitude of mind which the Catholic must avoid sedulously when he thinks or speaks about this matter. That is the mentality which prompted the statement condemned at Constance, the thought that there

is something unfair in the prospect of one man's having a great many prayers and Masses offered for him, while another with the same amount of temporal punishment to be expiated will be forgotten after his death. We must never allow ourselves to forget that God is Himself Infinite Justice and Infinite Mercy. The divine plan by which all things are carried out is one of infinite righteousness. We must not presume to judge God's plan and His judgments by our own puny reason. In this life we do not see, and we are not expected to see, the entire working out of the plan of the divine justice. We do not know how the prayer of the saints in heaven and the common prayer of the Church in this world is applied to the forgotten souls. The course of God's justice and the manner in which all things have contributed to manifesting it is something which we shall learn on the last day. In the meantime, we are expected to believe in the justice of God, and in our deeds and in our words to give practical expression of our knowledge that the ways of God are justice and mercy.

✠ F. Finally, our prayer can be of benefit to the living, and first of all to ourselves. But, just as the command of charity is that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, we are expected to manifest that love in praying for our neighbor as we do for ourselves, that is, in asking God to give to that neighbor the same gifts we hope and pray for ourselves. Prayer for others, for those men and women who are called upon to be our brothers and sisters in Christ, is a necessary and integral part of the Catholic life. The very prayer which our Lord gave to the Church to serve as the model and the basis of all the petition within that Church shows this necessity clearly enough. In that prayer, the "Our Father," we speak to



God as *our* Father, and the petitions of which it is composed are petitions for the body of the Church as a whole. God wishes us to know, and to manifest in our prayer the fact that the work of our salvation is a social and corporate activity. God does not choose to deal with us, even in the affair of our salvation, as separate and unrelated entities. He deals with us as persons united in a social organism, a society of which His Son is the Head. He wills that the activity of the members of this society should be of benefit to the other members, in such a way that the work of one man's salvation could truly be called the work of the Catholic Church. Thus he wills that the activity of one individual within that society should be of service and benefit to his fellows. He commands us to pray for our neighbors.

Prayer for others living with us in this world is an activity which is capable of considerable variety. We can pray for mankind in general, or for one man in particular. We can pray for various classes of men, and for the various societies which go to constitute the human race. There are, however, certain facts which we must take into consideration in order to understand this prayer for others as God wills that we should understand it.

First of all, in praying for mankind in general, we definitely do not petition God that all men without exception will be saved. Our prayer is supposed to be in conformity with the providence and will of God. We know well that in the mysterious and just decrees of providence it is decreed that some men will not be saved. God chooses to allow some men to persevere in their rejection of Him. We must take that fact into consideration. In general prayers for others we pray that God will give to all men the power to be saved, and that He will

shower His graces upon the men of this world, even though some men may choose to reject them. Thus we co-operate in the work of God, and act, as God wills that we should act, in the capacity of real, though secondary causes, in glorifying His name among men. It is interesting to note that, according to the writings of the most reputable theologians, God manifests His actual will of having all men saved by commanding His people to pray for all men. In the plan of divine providence, it is decreed and ordained that the prayer of the Christian people should be a means by which all men should actually have sufficient grace to be saved. Through this prayer for all men, the people of this world receive grace, which, if they co-operate with it, will bring them to eternal salvation. That is the tremendous power and importance of the prayer of the Church in the scheme of salvation.

✠ G. Among those who are meant to be the beneficiaries of our prayer as the just, those in the state of grace, the friends of God, even those who live according to a grade of charity and perfection that is heroic. St. Thomas lists three reasons why God wills that all should pray for those in the state of grace. In the first place we are to pray for them in order that through the multitude of prayers from the Christian people the perseverance of those in the state of grace may be procured. Second, it is fitting that many should thank God for the favors He has bestowed upon the just. In other words, according to the teaching of the Church, the favors bestowed by God upon the just are favors conceded to the entire Church, favors for which the entire Church can rightly thank Him. The union binding the members of Christ's mystical body is so close and intimate that favors of grace

conceded to one of its members are of benefit to all. As in a physical body, the well-being of one member affects all of the others. Furthermore, in that same reason, St. Thomas shows how the teaching on the integral parts of prayer has its influence in every activity of prayer. One of the parts of prayer is thanksgiving, and the gratitude of the member of the Church expressed in Catholic prayer should be such as to take into consideration the favors accorded to all the members of the Church.

The final reason why God wills that the members of the Church should pray even for those souls in the state of grace is for the humility of the just themselves. The just, those who are constituted in the friendship of God, are expected to progress in the life of grace and in humility. Their humility is strengthened by the realization that the favors which God has accorded to them are caused by the prayers of the least among the people of God. No one, no matter how he may be favored by God, can disregard the very people who, under God, have caused the favors of grace which he enjoys. Looking in this way at the effectiveness of prayer, we find that the sanctity and the genius of the most favored among the sons of the Church were due to the prayers of humble Christians. The saints are the ornaments of the mystical body of Christ, ornaments which have been fashioned and perfected in the prayers of the least among their fellow members.

✠ H. We pray that the just may persevere, and may finally attain to the eternal life into which the life of grace they live in this world should blossom. For those in the state of sin, we beg the divine forgiveness and the gift to them of the life of habitual grace. For those who lack faith, we ask the removal of their unbelief. The di-

rection of prayer is ever the same. It is a tremendous and benign power, drawing men toward the goal of eternal life, and bringing them the good things which they must have in order to possess that eternal life. The Church prays for sinners in general. We can pray for individual sinners. In one instance, for those who are excommunicated, who for a serious offense have been cast out of the communion of the Catholic Church, we cannot pray publicly. But there is nothing to prevent our praying for them privately, and begging God that they should repent of their sin, and return to their Father's house. The Catholic Church prays, and desires us to pray, for those who are her enemies, for those who are held in the bonds of Judaism, heresy, or paganism. The entire context of these prayers shows that they are not limited to those who are outside of the visible communion of the Church in good faith, but actually for those who oppose her. The Church prays that, "acknowledging the light of Thy truth, which is Christ, they may be brought out of their darkness."<sup>3</sup> And ultimately she prays, and she wills that her children should pray and act so that they may be brought to the fullness of that eternal life, to which they are introduced in the light of faith.

§ I. The charity which obliges us to pray for others binds us in a special way to those who are nearest to us in charity, our families, our friends and associates, the "neighbors" of the gospel. These have a call upon our prayers while they are in this world, and after they have passed into the life of the next. The same charity brings us to pray in a special way for those who are bound to us, and who are particularly close to us in the ties of love, the rulers of the Church and of the nation.

There are two distinct reasons why Christian charity demands that we should pray for the rulers of the State and of the Church. The first has to do with these rulers, considered in themselves. Charity is the virtue which is the form and the motivating influence for all of the others. In other words, it is essentially practical. There is no charity which does not command and effect obedience to God's commandments, and which does not bring about the performance of the other Christian virtues. One of these virtues is observance,<sup>4</sup> by which we give to rulers of the Church and of the State the honor and the respect which is rightly their due. For these men as individuals give something to us. We receive from them the direction of the Church and of the State as societies. That is a benefit which they confer upon us by the performance of those duties which God demands of them. It is something for which we can give no adequate recompense. But it is something which is due in strict justice, in such a way that a man who is seriously delinquent in the respect which he owes to his legitimate rulers cannot live the life of grace.

By the charity which we owe to these rulers, we are bound to pray for them. For charity, as a practical and effective love of benevolence, implies that we desire that these men should have the good things which are due to them because of their position. These benefits, which we cannot procure for them by our own unaided efforts, we can attain for them as the beneficiaries of our prayer. Prayer is the practical measure of our loyalty to the rulers of the Church and of the State.

The second reason has to do with these men in their social capacity, that is to say precisely in their work of directing the policies of the Church and of the State.



Naturally there is such a thing as charity for the Church. That charity is a love of benevolence for the Church, as it is. It manifests itself in a certain supernatural piety, an efficacious will to do what we should and can do for the well-being of the Church as an organization. Naturally, that implies a love of the Church as it actually is, as it is directed by this particular sovereign pontiff, and as it exists in this diocese under this particular bishop. The love for the Church, then, implies an active and vital will that this pope, and this bishop, should be successful in determining the activity of the Church. There can be no such thing as a love of the Church apart from a very real, and very efficacious charity for the rulers of the Church.

✠ J. Part of our contribution toward the success of the Church as it actually exists, is to be found in the activity of Christian prayer. In praying to God for the success of the rulers of the Church, we are manifesting to Him our sincere will that the Church should be successful, and that these, our fathers in Christ, should be successful in governing it. Naturally, a desire which we take the trouble to manifest to God should be one which is strong and sincere enough to dominate our own activity. It is expected to be the directing and motivating force of our own conduct to the rulers of the Church. A man who prays for the rulers of the Church would be insincere were he to act other than in such a way that his activity would benefit the rule of the pope and of the bishops.

The great theologian of the Council of the Vatican, Cardinal Pie of Poitiers, has written magnificently of the value of the prayer of the Christian people for the Vicar of Christ on earth. "If prayer, individual and isolated, can have such a great weight in the balance of human

affairs; if only one man of faith suffices to move the mountains; if from the most remote oratory a hidden soul can affect the most considerable interests, and act upon the destinies of kingdoms and of empires with the lever of prayer; what must be the force of the collective prayer of a whole people, of the concerted prayer of the entire Christian world?

“This is the principal means of government which our Lord Jesus Christ has given to His vicar on earth. The powers of this world have their armies and navies, their artillery and their instruments of death and destruction which grow more perfect day by day. But, if providence has willed that the sovereign monarch of Christianity should be independent in the temporal order, he is still regarded by statesmen as a ruler of the second order, and almost all of the formidable array of royalty is foreign to him.”

The conditions which obtained during the past century, and which closely approximate those of our own times showed very clearly that the natural means of rule were not to be relied upon for the government of the Church. Cardinal Pie saw that the existence and the work of the Church were continually attacked, and he showed that the Holy Father intervened in the affairs of this world for the salvation of souls, the proximate and immediate purpose of the Church itself, through the power of Christian prayer. “Then, when every way is closed to any sort of active participation, when all initiative is forbidden, must the papacy look on as a passive spectator of the calamities which weigh upon its children, look on without any means for acting upon the trend of this world? Those who think so and those who say so do not understand the prayer of two or three hundred million

souls, obedient to the Roman pontiff. But you, my brethren, know that there is one among us who holds the place of the Son of God Himself. By a sign of his authority he makes every knee bow down to earth, and every eye and arm rise up toward heaven to obtain those graces which his paternal heart considers requisite for society.”<sup>5</sup>

Time after time, in the past few years, the vicar of Christ has called for the prayers of the Catholic people for the graces which he knows to be necessary for the world. In praying for the Holy Father we pray for his intentions, and we become, in the order of divine providence, a cause of the graces which he desires for the Church of God. The charity which we have for the Church, the love which forms an integral part of the organism of the life of grace, demands that we should pray for the Father of Christendom.

✠ K. The same reason holds, obviously, in the case of those who, in the plan of God’s providence, are associated with the Holy Father in the government of the Catholic Church. It holds for prayer for our own bishops, those men who are legitimately the successors of the Apostles, and who are charged with the responsibility of taking care of the people of God. There is no such thing as a real charity for the Church apart from a sincere love of benevolence for these men. In loving the Church, we desire their success in the government of their own portion of the Church. Desiring that, we begin by praying for it. And our prayer is expected to be a force by which the bishop attains the end which God has marked out for him in the government of his people.

In praying for the pope and for the bishops of the Church, we follow the lead of our Blessed Lord. He prayed for the Apostles, as a distinct group. He prayed

for St. Peter in a special way. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou being once confirmed, confirm thy brethren."<sup>6</sup> We also follow the lead and the example of the Church of God, as exemplified in the liturgy of the Mass. Every Mass offered to God contains the remembrance of the Holy Father, and of the bishop of the diocese.

✠ L. The same charity which commands that we should pray for the rulers of the Church impels us also to petition God in favor of the rulers of the State itself. We pray for them as individuals, and as officials. We pray, in other words, that God will give them the good things which they should have in order to attain their salvation, and to live their lives in this world in circumstances in which they can best exercise their activity. We seek for them the good which belongs to the ruler of the State, the benefits which we know should be the blessings of those who are near and dear to us.

Furthermore, we co-operate in the attainment of the purpose of the State itself by our prayers for these rulers. St. Paul himself brought out that point when he told his disciple, Timothy, "I desire therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in high station, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."<sup>7</sup> St. Thomas saw in these words an indication of the fact that God wills that the Christian should aid actively in the accomplishment of the business of the State, and that this aid should be expressed and motivated in prayer.

The utility of these prayers for the rulers of the States lies in this, that through such prayers we procure our own good. The purpose of the State is directed, of course, to the perfection and the well-being of the people who compose it. And the desire of that well-being, manifest in the love of benevolence which is charity, commands prayer that the rulers of the States may bring their people to the perfection which God demands of them.

This civic function of prayer is something essential to it. Prayer would not be what it is, the petition of fitting things from God, did it not demand the good of the State, and as a result, the good of those who are entrusted by God with the rule and the direction of the State. Obviously then there is no more grotesque error than the thought of those who would tell us that prayer is something remote from the affairs of this world. And there is no man more dangerous and pernicious to the State than the man who ridicules or minimizes the value of prayer. In the actual order of divine providence, this prayer for the rulers of the State, commanded by God, practiced by the Church itself, and inspired by charity, is necessary for the success of the State. To avoid prayer is to neglect a means which is necessary for the well-being of the State itself.

The Catholic liturgy contains prayers for the rulers of the State, even if these rulers are not of the Catholic communion.

The Christian act and precept of prayer for the head of the State is the agency by which the proper affection for the head of the State can and should be maintained. It is the seal and the force of real civic loyalty. The man who prays for the head of the State is bound to regard him as such, and to give him in that capacity all of the



loyalty and the honor which his position and the good of the State require.

✠ M. The same precept of charity which necessitates prayer for the head of the Church and of the State, obliges us to pray for the Church and the State as organizations, and to obtain, through the channels of prayer, the corporate good of the Church and of the State. Obviously it impels us to pray for the good of families, and in particular for the success of our own. Likewise, that same precept of charity whereby we love our neighbor with a love of benevolence, and love him as he is, in the conditions under which God wills that he should save his soul, impels us to pray for the success of the other legitimate societies which men form within the State. These societies, the rights of which were so diligently and ardently defended by Pope Leo in the *Rerum Novarum* have their own legitimate purposes, and their own good which we can aid in procuring through the practice of prayer.

It is by no means an object of wonder that the great guilds, the organizations of workers by which the condition of the poor during the Christian centuries was so well protected, were organizations of prayer. Churches used by the guilds, like the beautiful Santa Maria del Orto of Rome, are eloquent of the fact that these most successful workers' organizations were societies of prayer. The universities which gave to the world the treasures of learning by which Christendom was strengthened and enriched were and are societies of prayer. The great university confides, for the attainment of its own end, not merely in the power of its natural resources, but in the prayer of its children, and in the common petition of all the people of God.

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## CHAPTER XI

### PRAYER FOR OUR ENEMIES

A. Because it is meant to proceed from charity, prayer must be offered even for our enemies.

B. By prayer we seek to aid our enemies to the attainment of their salvation, and not to further their hostility.

C. Special prayer for our enemies is not always required, but such prayer is a mark of intense charity.

D. Prayer for our enemies is in no way incompatible with defending ourselves against their attacks.

E. The Church prays for her enemies.

F. Prayer for the enemies of the Church involves the sincere will that they should be converted.



✠ A. We cannot begin to understand the full meaning of Christian prayer, or Christian charity itself, until we realize the Catholic teaching on prayer for our enemies. Those for whom we are to pray are, in the last analysis, those we are supposed to help because of this same charity. There are certain persons whom we love in charity but for whom we do not pray because they stand in no need of any assistance from us, namely, the blessed in heaven. But there is no one for whom we pray to whom we are not bound by the ties of divine love. The charity which binds us to God is strong enough to impel us to love even our enemies in this world. And the charity which impels us to love them with a love of benevolence commands that we exercise the activity of prayer in their favor.<sup>1</sup>

In the first place, in order to understand the meaning of this prayer for our enemies, we must realize the true meaning of the word *enemy*. Obviously this term does not apply to some person whose temperament does not happen to harmonize with our own. Enmity is far more than mere temperamental incompatibility. The Latin word of which "enemy" is the translation allows us an objective realization of its meaning. The Latin word is *inimicus*, obviously the contrary of the word for "friend," *amicus*. Just as a friend is one who has a mutual love of benevolence for another, and whose love is such that he wills that other an important good, an enemy is one who has a true hatred of another, and who wishes, efficaciously as he is able, to bring about evil in the life of another.

An enemy, then, is malicious and malevolent. The degree of his hostility is measured by the importance of the good of which he seeks to deprive us, or the harm which he seeks to inflict upon us. It is important to note that the Christian is not meant to be the enemy of any man in this world in the full sense of the term *enemy*. There is, the Christian knows well, one good which alone is important. The Christian seeks to deprive no man of this good. He is permitted, and in some cases he is obliged to oppose the designs of his enemy. But he is not to be moved by any hatred in his regard. He is not to hate him in return.

✠ B. It is possible to consider an enemy under two distinct headings. In the first place, we can treat of him, and think of him precisely insofar as he is an enemy. To love him in this sense would be to will that he continue in his hostility and hatred. It would be so to act that this man would persevere in evil. This attitude toward an enemy would be a manifestation of hatred for him. As

such it is out of place in the Christian life. It is incompatible with Christian charity.

Then it is possible to think of our enemy, and to act in his regard, insofar as he is a man. Considered as such, he has the same end as other men. He will find his ultimate beatitude only in the eternal possession and vision of God in heaven. The charity which is the motive force of the life of grace impels us to act toward our enemy in such a way that we can aid him to the accomplishment of that end. Charity is a love of God which involves the active and efficacious love of benevolence for all those whom God calls to live forever as His adopted children. As long as any man lives upon this earth, he is still in a condition to accept that call. God offers him the grace and the strength to be converted. We are expected to act in accordance with that grace, and that will which God has expressed in the words of the Apostle.

The love of charity is such that it must necessarily extend itself to all living men. If any man is excluded, that is, if we really make an exception of any one person in the desire we have that all be saved, ours is not the love of charity. We love God with this love of friendship, and thereby we will the good which God desires to all for whom He desires it. Charity is in the will. It is not any mere act of sentiment or emotion. Then it necessarily involves an active and practical will that all be saved. This will necessitates the employment of that means which God has placed in our power for the procuring of those goods which we are to have through the activity of God, in other words, prayer. Our prayers then will apply to all men, and no one can be excepted or excluded from these general prayers.

✠ C. Strictly speaking, as St. Thomas notes, there is no

direct obligation for loving our enemies with any special love.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, since the economy of prayer is dependent upon that of charity, there is no special obligation of particular prayer for our enemies, as there is in the case of those over whom we have charge, our parents, the members of our own families, and the heads of the Church and of the nation. We are not constrained by the laws of charity to show special marks of affection to all men, but only to those with whom we have most intimate contacts. And obviously the fact that a person has singled himself out by his hostility to us is no reason why we should be compelled to show him any special marks of affection.

Yet, if such special affection and such special prayers are not requisite generally and in themselves, they may be necessary by reason of some special circumstance. And they are most certainly a sign of perfection in the person who performs them freely. It was an act of special perfection that prompted St. John Gualbert to receive the murderers of his own brother into his own friendship. It was certainly an act of perfection that prompted St. Stephen the Protomartyr to pray for his killers. That was the prayer which, in the designs of God's providence, was the means of turning Saul the persecutor of the Christian Church into St. Paul, the Apostle of the gentiles.

✠ D. This prayer for our enemies is not in any way opposed to our resisting their efforts, in due moderation of course. To balk the designs of an enemy is to prevent him, insofar as lies within our power at least, from going on with and perfecting an act of sin. Resistance to an enemy, which is obligatory when the enemy attempts to destroy something which we are bound to protect, can and should be an act of charity.



In resisting the attacks of an enemy we can sometimes cause him a certain physical evil. In this sense only a physical evil can be, as we have seen, the object of prayer. In this case we can and should pray for the defeat of an army that is waging an obviously unjust war. Here, as in every other case, prayer which involves a physical evil is bound by all the obligations and the conditions of charity. It must not be wished or desired out of hostility, since in that case it would constitute the person who wished it as an enemy.

✠ E. All of the intense practicality of charity is bound up in this teaching on prayer for our enemies. The Church does not tell us to pray for those who hate us because they are not responsible. She makes no effort to minimize or excuse the sin of hatred. The point of the matter is that she tells us and commands us to include even those who hate us in the object of our charity. Even those who seek our ruin or destruction must be the beneficiaries of our prayer. The prayer of the Church itself is expended for those who strive to encompass her destruction. Charity, precisely because it is so important, is intensely practical and realistic. To pray for one's enemies does not involve any self-deception or hypnosis about the fact that they are enemies.

That same austerity of doctrine has an important bearing on the prayer and the activity of the Church itself. She prays and works for the conversion of all those who are outside her fold. She does not seek to make them think that they are in a good enough condition as they are. She is unwilling to lull others into a sense of false security. There is no evil which she abhors more strongly at the present time than the doctrine of indifferentism. The Church knows that it is a sorry sort of charity which

would lead a man to think that he was close enough to the Catholic Church, and that he did not need conversion. The good which we seek for ourselves and for others, the good which the Church seeks in all her prayers even for her most outstanding enemies, is the gift of eternal life. The Church knows well that there is no salvation except through herself.

✠ F. It is tremendously important that we should realize the practical implications of this prayer. The good which we seek for others, and for ourselves is a good which is eternal life. This eternal life is something which God concedes in a definite way. A man in the state of sin must do penance, and there is no other way in which he will receive the gift of God's grace. That penance itself will be due to the help which God offers him, but it is nonetheless requisite. This gift of eternal life is something which God gives only to those who have had the life of grace in this world, and as a result our prayer for our enemies involves the will that these should really repent in order that they may receive that life of grace. It is something which demands the gift of faith in this world also, and prayer for others involves the desire and the efficacious practical will that the beneficiaries of our prayer should believe the message of God. It involves the sacraments and the Church. The prayer which we offer for the salvation of our enemies, and for the enemies of the Church itself, must involve our will that they may be converted and may live and die in this communion of the Church of God.

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## CHAPTER XII

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

A. The "Our Father" summarizes all the teaching on Christian prayer.

B. We address God as Father because we are called upon to live the life of habitual grace, which we possess only as members of His divine Son.

C. He is *our* Father insofar as we are meant to act and to pray as members of a society which is the Catholic Church.

D. The words "Who art in heaven" show us that we pray to God as to the One who is infinite Beatitude, and from whom we ask a participation of His happiness.

E. The first petition seeks the glory of God for His sake.

F. The second petition asks for the realization of that glory in us.

G. In the third petition we ask for the meritorious activity by which we advance toward heaven.

H. The fourth petition asks for temporal blessings, in the measure in which these are conducive to the attainment of our ultimate end.

I. The fifth petition seeks forgiveness of the sin which could keep us apart from God.

J. The sixth petition asks that we be preserved from future sin.

K. The last petition is ordered to the removal of temporal evils insofar as these could be harmful to us in the attaining of our salvation.



✂ A. In order to understand Christian prayer, we must analyze the traditional definition of prayer, the petition of fitting things from God. That analysis gives us first of all the implications which follow upon the fact that

prayer is a petition, and then the teaching about the object of prayer. From the analysis of that definition we see that prayer is an act of the practical intelligence, that is, of the mind insofar as it is moved by the will. We learn that this act of the practical intelligence is something which is ordered as a real and requisite cause of man's eternal salvation in the decrees of God's providence. Furthermore, we find that this act is essentially an act of religion, an act in which man renders to God the service and the honor which are due to Him because of His supreme excellence.

Looking at the same traditional definition in its proper perspective of Catholic theology, we see that a petition to God is something which can be made, and under certain circumstances should be made to Him through the saints, that is, through those who live with Him in the eternal glory of heaven. Prayer is made to God and the saints for eternal life and all of those goods which are conducive to eternal life, precisely in the measure in which they are seen as thus conducive to it. It is said for the benefit of ourselves and those who live with us in this world, individually and corporately, and for the souls in purgatory.

All of that teaching, and as a matter of fact, all that the Catholic Church teaches on prayer is summed up in that formula of prayer which our Lord gave to His disciples and to His Church as the model upon which all the petition of that Church was to be based. There never has been and there never could be a prayer of the Catholic Church which passes beyond the teachings contained in the "Pater Noster." For that reason the formula of the "Our Father" has been the favorite vehicle of teaching about prayer since the very first days of Christendom. The earliest treatises on prayer were nothing more or

less than commentaries on this formula. Tertullian and St. Cyprian in the West, and Origen in the East constructed their books on Christian prayer around the words which our Lord Himself had given.

St. Thomas Aquinas used the Lord's Prayer quite frequently as a vehicle to contain his own doctrine on prayer.<sup>1</sup> And, in the *Summa Theologica* he epitomizes what he has already taught about the definition of prayer and the implications of that definition in the article in which he inquires into the question "Are the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer aptly assigned?" The keynote of his teaching, a teaching which the Christians of this age are privileged and expected to understand, is contained in the declaration that "In the Lord's Prayer, not only are all the things which we can rightly desire petitioned, but also in that order in which they are to be desired. Thus this prayer tells us not only how we should petition, but it is informative about our entire affection." St. Thomas explains in this same article the way in which the seven petitions which make up the substance of the Lord's Prayer express the order in which we should desire and hope from favors from God.

✠ B. In the first place, since prayer is said to God, not to bend His will to our intentions, but to place our own wills in harmony with His and to excite our confidence in Him, we address Him as our Father. Speaking to Him in this way, we are mindful of His love for us. God is our Father in the sense that we are called upon to be His adopted children, incorporated into the mystical body of His Son. Only the person who is in the state of grace actually lives the life of the adopted child of God. For the divine adoption is something much more perfect than any human adoption could possibly be. In the case of a



man who accepts a child as his adopted son, there is, in the last analysis, nothing but a legal fiction. That man might have a great love for the one whom he adopts, but the concept of paternity is not the same as the concept of love. A father is one from whom a person derives his being as from a conjoined and active principle. The life which he derives must be like to the life of the father himself. It is obvious that, however the law may look to the relationship between two individual men, one of whom has adopted the other, that man is not the active source of the life which this second man enjoys.

According to the standard definition, habitual grace is the formal and physical, though analogous, participation of God's own nature. It is a gift, a quality which we receive from God by which we are enabled connaturally to perform those acts which are on the level of the divine rather than of the human life, to know God as He is in Himself, and to love Him insofar as He is known in that way. This quality is something which is received only by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ by those who are members of Christ's mystical body. Hence the person who possesses this life of grace has God as his Father by this double reason. At the same time every man in this world has the grace sufficient for him to be justified, and to live this life of habitual grace. He is potentially a child of God. And those who are members of the Church are members of Christ, the true Son of God, even though they are not in the state of grace. We are taught to speak to God as the Head of the supernatural order, the Author and the source of the life of grace.

✠ C. Furthermore, we address Him as *our* Father. This is a recognition of the fact that God wills to save us, not as isolated and separate individuals, but as members of

a definitely organized and visible society. Ours is not a communion with individuals whom we do not know. It is a union in the one visible Church which Christ our Lord founded, and which He maintains for the furtherance of His work. Of this Church, some are members actually. Of these some are in the state of grace, and some are not. Others are members of that visible Church in more or less proximate potency. We pray for all whom God calls to the unity of its membership, in order that they may have that eternal life which God wills that they should possess through their membership in the Church.

✠ D. Finally, we speak to our Father, *who art in heaven*. In prayer we ask for our ultimate beatitude. We ask this favor from the Source of that beatitude, the One who is Himself infinitely and eternally blessed. The eternal happiness we seek is a partaking or sharing of the eternal happiness of God, and we seek this from Him as from the One who possesses that happiness of which ours is to be the participation, from the One who alone can grant us the favor we desire.

The actual petitions of the Lord's Prayer are divided off, first of all, by the fact that they refer either to the end of eternal life, or to the means by which we attain that end. The first two have reference to the thing which we seek principally in prayer. The others have to do with good things which are requisite for the attainment of that ultimate good.

The Good, which is the End of our supernatural life, and the Good which we seek principally in prayer, the Good for the sake of which we seek everything else for which we pray or work is God Himself, as the Head of the supernatural order. It is God Himself, insofar as He is our ultimate and perfect beatitude. But as such He can

be considered in two ways. First, we can think of Him objectively, as the One in whose possession we hope to have our eternal felicity. Then there is the actual possession of that perfection. We speak of Him as our objective Beatitude. The attainment and possession of God in the beatific vision is our formal beatitude.

✠ E. Our intention of having God Himself as our final End is expressed in the words, *Hallowed be Thy name*. That intention is the desire of hope, inspired by charity, the love of God for His own sake. By this intention we desire the glory of God. We will that the name of God be sanctified. We will, in other words, that the glory of God, His beauty and His goodness be recognized and appreciated, that He should be known and approved. That will is the will of charity, the intention which governs the love of benevolence which we have for God. There is nothing lacking in God. There is no benefit which He could receive from us, or from all His creatures together. The thing which is the end and the purpose of creation, that which we desire and work for out of the love of charity is His goodness, not to be augmented, but to be shared and participated by His creatures. In willing that the name of God should be glorified or sanctified, we express the desire and the intention of Christian charity, that men should know and love the goodness of God.

✠ F. The second petition of the Our Father, *Thy kingdom come*, is the expression of our hope, again inspired by charity. In this we beg for our formal beatitude, our actual possession of God for all eternity. In this petition we ask to attain the glory of God's kingdom.

We shall not have grasped the lesson of the Lord's Prayer for the Christian life and for the intention of the Christian, unless we realize that this is expressive of the

way in which our charity is expected to work. Charity is not a mere sentimental or emotional love for God. It is an act of the will, and as such the mainspring of all our Catholic activity. God does not call upon us to love Him in any way that would be independent of the desire of our own salvation or perfection.

There is no mistake of more regrettable consequence for Catholic life than the notion that the virtue of charity is in some way or another intended to be divorced or separated from hope, or from any of the other Christian virtues. In condemning the doctrine of Fénelon, the Church made it clear that there is no status of Christian life in which a man may dispense with the activity of hope, or of the prayer of petition for one's own salvation. The Pater Noster teaches us that the glory of God, the end which we seek in the love of charity, is something which is in fact inseparable from the love of hope. In loving God for His own sake, and thereby loving Him in such a way as to will His glory, we automatically desire our own participation of that glory. In desiring that the goodness and the beauty of God should be known and loved, we will that we ourselves should see and love it forever. We must never overlook the fact that we do not approach God as His equals. We do not come to Him as persons who have nothing to gain from Him. We contribute to His glory insofar as we desire and actively work for the attainment of our own salvation.

The first two petitions have to do with the end of our desire and intention in prayer. The remaining five petitions are directed to the means to the attainment of that end. We can consider means to an end in two distinct ways. First, there are positive goods, which will aid to the achievement of that end. Then there are certain im-

pediments, which stand in the way of the fulfilling of our intentions. The removal of these impediments is helpful to us, and is the object of our petition.

¶ G. The positive gifts which we seek of God as means to the attainment of salvation are either principal means, or secondary and dependent. Principally, the means for the attainment of our salvation is meritorious activity, viewed in all its fullness, with all of the forces which are brought into play for the performance of that activity. This meritorious activity, with all of the organism of grace which comes with it, is asked for in the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, *Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven*. Sylvius reminds us at this point that this third petition has to do with the commandments of God, that is to say, what is called the "will of sign."<sup>2</sup> In other words, in this petition we beg of God the grace to obey His commandments, and to love Him as we should in this world. We give practical recognition to the fact that this grace is something which is necessary for us, and which we can obtain only from God. That is the direction to which we work, and the end for which we pray. Obviously we do not mean that by our prayer we are to achieve the end of salvation apart from the meritorious activity by which God decrees that salvation should be attained. The qualification, "on earth as it is in heaven" is an indication of the fact that the life of charity in this world is the preparation for, and the beginning of, the life of heaven itself. The obedience to the commandments of God in this world is an activity of that same life which will find its full development and, as it were, its proper place in heaven.

¶ H. As instruments to that supernatural and meritorious activity, we seek every other gift for which we ask



in prayer. All these other favors are summed up in the phrase, *Give us this day our daily bread*. All the temporal and spiritual goods which God gives us are gifts to be used for the living of a meritorious life. Again, the direction of the divine will is apparent. The sacraments themselves, all the benefits which the Church confers upon us, as well as all the gifts which are temporal in nature are to be used for the glory of God, for the attainment of our salvation, in the living of a life of charity.

✠ I. The last three petitions are ordered toward the removal of those obstacles which would stand in the way of our attainment of heaven. The first is sin itself, mortal sin, by which the soul is voluntarily averted from God and deprived of the gift of habitual grace. This sin directly shuts us out of the kingdom of heaven. It is the only cause which can keep us apart from God. We pray that this sin should be removed in the petition, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*. This petition is meant to be primarily a plea for the forgiveness of mortal sin. It is also, of course, a petition for the forgiveness of venial sin.

By the fact that it contains this petition, the Lord's Prayer is fitted for the forgiveness of mortal sin. It can be considered as an act of perfect contrition. However, as St. Thomas remarks, it is more perfectly adapted to be the means of wiping out venial sin than of mortal sin, because it does not express the full complexity of contrition and because it is not directly a part of the sacrament of penance. No mortal sin, committed after baptism, is ever forgiven independently of the sacrament of penance. So, if a mortal sin were forgiven in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, if the petition *forgive us our trespasses* were answered by the remission of some mortal sin and

the conferring of grace upon a person who had sinned mortally after the reception of baptism, it would be only insofar as this petition implied at least an implicit intention of recurring to the sacrament, and, of course, the intention of not sinning again.

The condition, *as we forgive those who trespass against us*, is requisite for the reception of the favor we ask. The forgiveness of our enemies means our intention to do good rather than evil to them, even while we recognize that they are our enemies. It is the expression of an ardent and practical charity. It is included in the formula of the Lord's Prayer, since the presence of any act, like charity, is attested by the existence of its most difficult and, as it were, far-reaching effect. The love of our neighbor, and in particular the love of our enemies, those who hate us and attempt to harm us, is thus the index by which we judge the presence of charity.

St. Thomas notes also that the recitation of this prayer unfortunately does not imply necessarily the presence of charity in the one who says it. For, as a matter of fact, that prayer is said in the name of the entire Church, and the person who recites it speaks the truth when he says, "as we forgive those who trespass against us"; for the Church of which he is a member, and of which he has the grace sufficient to constitute him as a living member, actually does express its charity for God in the actual forgiveness it accords to its enemies.

✠ J. Just as all that we desire to have, we wish insofar as it can aid us in the accomplishment of our salvation, through the living of a meritorious life of grace, all that from which we desire to be freed is considered either as sin, or as something which might lead us into mortal sin, and thus shut us out of heaven. The first thing from

which we ask to be delivered in order that we may avoid sin is temptation. We ask God that *He lead us not into temptation.*

A temptation is an incentive to sin. In making this petition as a part of our Christian prayer, we are not asking to have a life in which we shall experience no temptations whatsoever. In the order of divine providence it is decreed that as long as we live in this world we shall have temptations, and the overcoming of these temptations constitutes, as a matter of fact, the triumphant living of a Christian life. Neither do we mean that God Himself leads us into temptation, in the sense that it is He who tempts us. Such a thought would be blasphemous, and a contradiction of God's own doctrine. We ask that we be given the grace to overcome all the temptations with which we shall come in contact.

We must understand that petition in function of that Catholic doctrine on the necessity of grace and prayer which we have seen before. The natural force of man suffices to enable him to overcome some temptations. But, because of the wounding of his nature as a consequence of original sin, he would not be able to overcome all temptations, or to persevere for any considerable time without falling into sin without the healing grace of God. Furthermore, grace is absolutely necessary in order that a man may continue to live the life of habitual grace. It is for grace in this sense that we petition thus in the Lord's prayer.

✠ K. Any other misfortune, any physical evil which St. Thomas expresses in the term "the penalty of this present life," is something which might stand in the way of the full living of the life of grace. Of course this is contingent. Just as a temporal good is something which we

desire conditionally, insofar as it is designed in the scheme of God's providence for aiding us in the accomplishment of our salvation, so deliverance from physical evil, suffering, sickness, and the like, is something for which we ask on condition that this deliverance be actually useful for us in attaining heaven. We ask relief from all these temporal evils in the petition, *deliver us from evil*.

Naturally, in this petition, we do not ask that we should live a life free altogether from suffering. Christ is the Exemplar of the life of the Christian in this world, and He is the Exemplar insofar as He lived and suffered. "God forbid that we should wish to be delicate members of a Head that was crucified." We ask for relief from suffering, for the healing of injuries and the curing of sickness, for freedom from war and pestilence insofar as God wills that we should be freed, in order to live fully and perfectly to Him.

St. Thomas reminds us of the teaching of St. Augustine on the matter of the Lord's Prayer. The first three petitions are such that their perfect fulfillment will only take place in the next world. The other four petitions have to do with the necessities of this present life. With this article, St. Thomas completes his analysis of the definition of prayer itself. The remainder of the treatise has to do with the properties of prayer, with those characteristics which follow upon prayer because it is the petition of fitting things from God.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THOSE WHO CAN PRAY

A. Prayer is an act which can be performed only by one who possesses a created intellectual nature.

B. One who prays must be within the supernatural order.

C. He must be in a position to exercise active causality within that order.

D. He must be aided by the grace of God.

E. He must be enlightened by a supernatural revelation which in this world we accept on faith.



✂ A. In general only creatures endowed with intelligence can pray. For, as St. Thomas tells us, prayer is an act of the practical intelligence by which we address a petition to a superior, in order that this superior may give us the object of our desire. Then only those who have an intelligence which can order<sup>1</sup> and who have at the same time a superior upon whom they depend can make this petition. This rules out all material creatures inferior to man. Likewise the divine nature cannot possibly be the subject of prayer.

The Scripture speaks of the Holy Ghost as petitioning for us. The unanimous consent of Catholic tradition interprets this passage as meaning that He moves us to pray. The prayer is attributed to Him, not because He exercises this activity as such but insofar as He is the First Cause of the prayer which is offered to God by those in whom He resides.



Christ our Lord is a divine Person. He prays. But that prayer is something which proceeds from His human nature, an act of His human intelligence. Christ assumed a perfect human nature, a body and a soul like to ours in everything except sin, so that He might use that human nature in the work of our redemption. The work which He could do in a human nature was the work of religion, work which consisted in giving to God, as God, the service and the honor which belong rightly to Him. Prayer is a part of that work. It is the act of a divine Person, but at the same time it is an act which He can perform because of His created human nature. The divine nature could not be the source of any activity which has an essential reference to any superior.

✠ B. Prayer, then, is an activity which can be exercised only by an angelic or a human nature. But there are certain definite conditions which must be fulfilled in order that a man or an angel can pray. As the petition of fitting things from God, prayer is a kind of active causality by which a creature is impelled to the attainment of that supernatural end in which God has placed the only ultimate beatitude of His intellectual creatures. Obviously, then, those who are definitely shut off from the attainment of that end, and who are powerless to exercise any activity in the direction of that end cannot, and do not pray. The fallen angels and those men who are shut off with them from the eternal beatitude of heaven are incapable of the activity of prayer, not because of any fault of nature, but because of their position.

For prayer is essentially a supernatural activity. In order to understand it properly, we must consider it as such. The thing which makes a man able to pray is not the fact of his human nature, but the grace which God

gives him. The end, and the only end, for which prayer is instituted and which it attains is definitely supernatural. Anyone is able to make a petition by the very fact that he is a man. But prayer is a special sort of a petition. It is made to God for fitting things, in such a way that it is designed to be a real and active cause of the benefits it seeks. It is essentially and primarily an act of religion, an act in which a man protests his service and reverence to God. It could not be performed by a man who did not will the service and the glory of God. Prayer is something which cannot be taken out of its proper perspective of religion and causality. Those who are in hell are thus utterly incapable of an act of prayer in the strict and theological sense which Catholic tradition has assigned to the term.

It is at least probable that the souls in purgatory cannot pray for themselves or for us. Technically, of course, it is correct to say that God has not revealed to us that the souls in purgatory actually do exercise the activity of prayer. A great number of reputable and prominent Catholic theologians put forward the theory that there is nothing in revelation to indicate that they cannot pray. They teach that it is probable that they can and perhaps even do pray for us. It is interesting to note, however, that they put this statement forward as something connected with, but not as something contained in the deposit of revelation. And the intrinsic reasons alleged by St. Thomas Aquinas and by certain other theologians of great weight are such as to give at least the balance of probability to the doctrine which denies that these souls can pray.

✠ C. The souls in purgatory have the human nature which is requisite for the formation of a petition. They

have the life of grace, with its tendency and orientation toward heaven. They have the desire to serve God in religion. But they are not in a position to exercise the active causality which is essential to prayer. As such they are not in a position to make the petition to God for the things which are fitting for them.

It is definitely a part of Catholic doctrine that our Lady and the angels and the saints in heaven pray. They exercise this activity in our behalf rather than in their own favor. At the same time their petition is such as to be classified as prayer in the strict sense of the term. The desire which they express in prayer is not the desire of hope, since they themselves have not the Christian virtue of hope. For hope is a tendency toward a good which we have not as yet acquired, and the blessed in heaven have actually acquired the one great Good which is the object of all of their love. They have a certain hope, in the broad sense, in their love of charity for us.

They will us the good which God intends that we should have when they love us with the love of benevolence in charity. This constitutes a certain kind of hope for us. It constitutes the desire, the expression of which is manifest to God in the petition of their prayer.

Every man who lives in this world, and who has the actual use of reason is able to pray. All of the conditions necessary for the activity of prayer are present in the case of any living person who has the use of reason. There is the human nature, qualified to make a petition, and the actual command of that nature in the use of reason. There is grace, always offered to the man who lives in this world, as long as he lives in it. There is the power to worship God, and to give Him the service and the honor due to Him. And there is the power of active

causality. The reason why men are placed in this world is that they may labor and pray, and thus, living the life of habitual grace, pass through the portals of death to the fullness of that life of grace in heaven. In other words, active causality in the supernatural order is part of the very reason for the existence of this earthly life. The causality of prayer is in line with the whole direction and the whole mentality of this life. And, as long as a man lives, no matter how deeply he may be immersed in sin, he still has the grace sufficient to be converted and to return to God. There is always the active causality toward the accomplishment of our eternal salvation open to us. That possibility is open up to the moment of our death.

✠ D. While every man in this world has the grace to pray, if he wishes to do so, it must be understood clearly that grace is necessary.<sup>2</sup> Naturally a person in the state of habitual grace can pray. But the state of habitual grace is not strictly requisite for prayer. Otherwise a man in the state of sin could never pray for the forgiveness of his offenses against God and reinstatement in the life of grace.

For the person who lives in this world, the causality of prayer is something which extends from the depths of sin to the very heights of perfection. There is only one direction to that causality, the direction to God. Any person who utilizes the causality of prayer is brought nearer to God. From the state of sin he is brought to conversion and justification. From the way of the beginner in the spiritual life he is brought to perfection. And always he is brought toward the attainment of God in the beatific vision in heaven. There is no such thing as prayer without grace, without special help from God

which is not due to our human nature, but so long as we live upon this earth, that grace is available to us.

✠ E. Another requisite for prayer is supernatural knowledge. For our Lord, and for all the blessed in heaven, that knowledge is the beatific vision itself. For those who pray in this world, that knowledge is that of Christian faith. The man who has not faith cannot pray, because he is not aware of the fitting things which he should petition from God, and he does not recognize God in the way in which He must be recognized in order to pray to Him. The habit of faith is not requisite. God offers men actual graces by which they are enabled to believe in Him in order to effect within themselves the dispositions for justification. An infidel, one who has never come in contact with the teaching of Christ, is nevertheless within the scope of God's providence. He is in this world in order to effect the salvation of his own soul. That is the purpose of the world in which we live. The conduct, the government of this world by God is geared in such a way that every man who attains the use of reason is offered sufficient grace to believe, and through belief, to pray and pray successfully for the gift of eternal life, to be possessed by one who has lived the life of habitual grace in this world.



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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

A. Christ our Lord prayed during His earthly life, and prays now in heaven for our salvation.

B. The prayer of Christ was instructive for us both by way of example, and in its doctrinal content.

C. The purpose of the passion is manifest clearly in the sacerdotal prayer of Christ.

D. The first section of this prayer is a petition for His own glory.

E. The second part is a petition for the apostolic college.

F. The third section asks blessings for the Church as a whole.

G. The prayer of Christ which was an expression of His absolute will was always answered since it sought an effect procured by the sacrifice of Calvary.

H. The prayer of the Church is in union with the petition of Christ.



✕ A. We have seen that Christ actually prayed, that He really petitioned God for things which were fitting in the order of God's providence. In order to understand the prayer of Christ our Lord as we should, we must know the object of that prayer, its continuity, and the relation of that prayer with the petitions which we, His followers, offer to God in His name. We shall find that the absolute and unconditioned object of that prayer was and still is the glory of God, to be accomplished in the fullness of Christ Himself. The fullness of Christ is effected in the union with Him of those souls who live

the life of God's adopted children in Him and through Him. The fullness of Christ, in other words, is effected in the affair of our salvation.

Christ prayed throughout His life in this world,<sup>1</sup> and furthermore He prays now, with the true prayer of petition for the salvation of those for whom He died. His prayer, expressed in the eternal and perfect sacrifice of Calvary, is the power which gives the prayer we offer to God its effect. The prayer of Christ is effective in every petition which His followers make to God in His name.

The immediate purpose of the prayer of Christ was, of course, the affair of our salvation. The prayer of our Lord was of benefit to us in two distinct ways. In the first place, it procured by way of impetration the graces and helps which we need for the attainment of our eternal happiness. In the second place, that prayer was a means of instruction for members of the Church of Christ.

✠ B. The instructive value of our Lord's prayer was expended in two distinct directions. In the first place, in His prayer, Christ our Lord taught us by way of example.<sup>2</sup> He is our Exemplar. His life on this earth is the one upon which our lives must be modeled, if those lives are to be successful. His was a life of prayer because the Christian who follows after Him must lead a life of prayer. It is recorded that Christ prayed continuously. Time after time it is written of Him that He passed the night in prayer. He prayed to God at the most solemn moments, before the choice of His Apostles, before the raising of Lazarus, before leaving the cenacle, and at the beginning of the Passion in the garden of olives. He told His disciples that prayer was necessary. But He taught most strongly by the force of His example.

Furthermore the prayer of Christ was a means of

teaching His followers the purpose of His life, and the purpose and the conditions of the life of the Church of which He is the Head. The prayer of our Lord in the Garden of Olives was the means by which He taught men, in a striking fashion that He has a human will, distinct from the will of His divine nature. "My Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me"; He said, and He added, "Not as I will but as Thou wilt."<sup>3</sup> As a man, as One possessed of a complete and perfect human nature, He willed the integrity of that nature, and reacted against those forces which were destructive of human life. But, in His love for us, that will was conditional and inefficacious. His manifestation of that will in prayer was done for our benefit. Through that we could come to know something of the suffering that He endured in order that we might be happy with Him forever in heaven. He willed His own human well-being, in other words, exemption from the terrible agony of the crucifixion, conditionally, under the condition that this should be according to the will of God. As a matter of fact it was not acceptable, and freely He willed, unconditionally and absolutely to die in order to redeem us from our sins.

✠ C. There is one prayer of Christ in which the purpose and the nature of His act of redemption is particularly manifest. That purpose is something complex. The immediate purpose of the death of Christ was the redemption of man from sin. That redemption was accomplished in an act of sacrifice, by which the justice of God was satisfied, and in which eternal life was merited and efficaciously produced for mankind. This same act merited for Christ a certain glory, not the essential glory of being the Son of God, for this was something which He

did not merit but possessed by nature. This accidental glory was and is the triumphal manifestation of His human nature.

The prayer in which that purpose is manifest is the sacerdotal or priestly prayer of Christ, recorded in the gospel according to St. John. In that prayer, uttered at the close of the Last Supper, He manifested the intention which the sacrifice of the next day was to accomplish.

✠ D. "These things Jesus spoke: and lifting up His eyes to heaven He said; Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee:<sup>4</sup>

"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all, whom Thou hast given Him.

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.

"I have glorified Thee on earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.

"And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee."

The first part of the sacerdotal prayer contains Christ's petition for Himself. He asks the glory which belongs to Him, and which is to be His at the finish of that which was the work for which He assumed His human nature, the work of the redemption. The petition is composed of the parts which enter into the composition of any complete prayer. There is the actual statement of the desire, the *postulation*, "And now glorify Thou Me." There is the *raising of the mind to God*, the consideration of God insofar as this petition is addressed to Him. Christ speaks to God as His Father, with all of the

tremendous weight of meaning that is attached to that term. There is the reason for the granting of the petition. It is for the glory of God Himself. The petition of Christ manifests an intention which is grounded in the ultimate purpose of all the universe. There is the *thanksgiving*, the loving recognition of the dependence of the Redeemer as man upon God. "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh." The thanksgiving consists in the recitation of the favor which God has conferred upon the human nature of Christ, the favor of grace of being the head of the mystical body. The *oration* in this case manifests a difference which marks it from the same part of the prayer of the Christian. The reason why the prayer of Christ is to be granted is to be found in His own merits. We depend upon His merits rather than upon our own.

The doctrinal content of this part of the sacerdotal prayer is the teaching on the very purpose of Christ and His work. He was given power over all flesh, dominion over all men, in order that He might give eternal life to all whom God the Father gave to Him. In other words, those who come to Christ and are actually enlivened by the grace He merited for us and actually achieve the salvation in which their only ultimate blessedness consists, are those who are moved by the grace of God. No one can come to Christ except through the grace of God. Furthermore He tells what this eternal life is. It is the vision of God, to know God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. It is the vision of God, the vision of the Blessed Trinity, and not merely the knowledge of God insofar as He is the cause of creatures, a knowledge which does not reach the existence and the distinction of the three divine Persons.



✠ E. The second part of the priestly prayer is for the apostolic college, and through them for the Church which He founded upon them. It is itself manifestive of the purpose of the passion. The work of the redemption was to be accomplished in men drawn together in the supernatural unity of the Catholic Church, rather than in men taken apart from one another. Those who belong to Christ are gathered together in Him, and out of the world.

“I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world: Thine they were, and to Me Thou gavest them: and they have kept Thy word.

“Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given Me are from Thee:

“Because the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them: and they have received them, and have known in very deed that I came out of Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me: because they are Thine:

“And all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine: and I am glorified in them:

“And now I am not in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me: that they may be one as We also are.

“While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name. Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept: and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture may be fulfilled.

“And now I come to Thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy filled in themselves.

"I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, as I also am not of the world.

"I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil.

"They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world.

"Sanctify them in truth, Thy word is truth.

"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

"And for them also do I sanctify Myself: that they also may be sanctified in truth."

It was, and is the intention of our Lord that the Apostles, and the Catholic Church which was to be founded upon them, were to be separated from the world. He willed and petitioned that they should be sanctified by God. They are His, in a sense that the world, the body of the human race, is not. They are sent by Him into the world, as He had been sent by the Father. The intention is the same. Their work is His work, the sanctification of men. For that purpose He begs God to keep them from evil.

✠ F. Finally, the consummation and the fullness of that prayer is expressed in the third part, which is for the Church as a whole, for the organization which the Apostles were to direct and which was to be their charge. In this petition the full intention of Christ is revealed.

"And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me:

"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

"And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have

given to them, that they may be one, as We also are One.

"I in them, and Thou in Me: that they may be made perfect in one: and the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou also hast loved Me.

"Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me: and that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world.

"Just Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.

"And I have made known Thy name to them, and will make it known: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them, and I in them."

The meaning of that prayer is so clear that it needs no commentary. Christ our Lord willed for those who are His a partaking of His own glory. He willed that they should be joined to Him in the unity of faith, and of a faith which is consummated and perfected in charity. Those who are His are those who are joined in the disciplined unity of the Catholic Church. And the unity of that Church is the unity of charity itself, likened to, and modeled after the unity of the nature of God.

✠ G. The prayer of Christ, insofar as that prayer is the expression of His absolute and unconditioned will, is always answered. As He prayed for us then, and as He continues His prayer for us in heaven, He causes the good which He asks God to give us. But the prayer of Christ is something which cannot be taken apart from His sacrifice. A sacrifice, as we have seen, is an act of religion which is meant to express and sum up all the internal acts of religion of the persons who offer it.<sup>5</sup> The sacrifice of Christ summed up and manifested the prayer

of Christ and His devotion to His Father. The effect which the prayer of Christ produces is an effect which it acquired through the sacrifice of the cross, in which it was expressed.

Thus prayer and sacrifice are joined. The sacrifice is valid insofar as it is really the sign of prayer and devotion. And the prayer of Christ produced its effects insofar as it was expressed in the sacrifice. That was the design of providence. That was the work of Christ. The sacrifice of the Cross was effective of a certain definite result.<sup>6</sup> It was satisfactory for the sin which man had committed against God. It was meritorious and impetratory of the life of grace and charity for men. It was redemptive of man from sin. The purpose of the sacrifice was the intention of Christ, and it was His will and the will of His Father that this intention should take the form of prayer.

✠ H. The fact of the matter is, then, that there is no favor which is conceded to any man which was not procured by the prayer of Christ. Among these favors are some for which we ourselves pray. We are to pray for these favors in the name of Christ. We are to ask God to give them to us insofar as we are joined with Christ. This union is not in any merely invisible or hazy gathering of the just or of men of good will. It is a union within the definite organism of the Church itself. It is a disciplined union, in faith and the sacraments, a union which is perfected in the practical force of divine charity.

The practical point is that the force of our prayer is the power of the prayer of Christ Himself. The things for which we ask as conducive to our salvation are the very things for which He has asked God. Our intention, in the economy of Christian prayer, is the intention of Christ. And our victory is His.

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## CHAPTER XV

### THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

A. The prayer of the Church is a petition that the purpose for which the Church was instituted be accomplished.

B. The central prayer of the Church is based upon the Pater Noster.

C. The prayer of the Church is meant to be effective through the sacrificial action which is integrated into it.

D. The words in which the sacrificial action formally consists constitute the form of the sacrament about which the whole life of the Church revolves.

E. Christian prayer is thus essentially and intimately connected with the sacrifice and the sacrament of the Eucharist.

F. The prayer of the Church is a real petition, containing the four parts which go to make up the integrity of prayer.



✕ A. Like Christ, her divine Head, the Catholic Church has a very definite function and purpose. Like Him also she is cognizant of that purpose and intends to fulfill it. The purpose of the Church is something which she, like Christ, expresses and manifests in her prayer, and in a prayer which is meant to be epitomized and signified in an act of sacrifice.

The intention of the Catholic Church is nothing more or less than the intention of Christ, her divine Founder and Head. What He wished to do upon this earth is the exact purpose which she wishes and intends to accomplish. She is sent into the world with the same mission as that which was given to Christ Himself. She is cog-



nizant of that mission and that purpose. She knows well that hers is a mission which can only be accomplished with the aid of God's grace, an aid which will not be given except in answer to prayer. Therefore there is such a thing as an official Christian prayer, the prayer of the Catholic Church as an organization. It is a petition addressed to God that He may accomplish the good for which the Catholic Church is placed in the world.

It is the prayer of a definite group, those whom God the Father has given to Christ, and has joined to Him in the unity of His mystical body. It is the prayer of those who are joined to Christ through the regenerating waters of baptism and who remain in disciplined association with Him and the other members of His Church, believing what He teaches in the Church, and subject to the authority of that Church. This group, the successors of the Apostles, and those who have believed through the words of the Apostles, has its own definite prayer. It manifests its desire, or its intention to God in a certain definite formula, which has remained substantially unchanged through the ages. It is called the prayer of the Mass. In all of the rites, and in all of the languages in which the Mass has been celebrated since the beginning of Christian history, the desire and the intention of which that prayer is the manifestation has remained the same. We know that it will ever remain unchanged. So the formula of the Latin Mass of the Roman rite is valid as a means for showing the meaning and the extent of the petition of the Christian Church.

✠ B. Apart altogether from the proper of the Mass for the various Sundays and feast days throughout the year, the ordinary of the Mass shows us with striking clarity that the Catholic Church desires and prays for exactly

that which Christ desired, and for which He prayed and still prays. All that Christ wanted man to will, all that He comprehended within the limits of the Our Father is expressed in the liturgy of the Mass. We can well consider the priestly prayer of Christ as a sort of commentary on the Pater Noster, an explanation of what Christ meant by the petitions, "hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

In the same way the prayer of the Church is, as it were, the commentary authorized by God Himself on the words of Christ. The union which Christ willed and prayed for among His followers is the union of faith, obedience, and charity which is spoken of and asked for in the prayer of the Mass. That union is something which transcends the boundaries of time and space, which embraces the blessed in heaven, and the members of the Church suffering in purgatory. The motives underlying Christian activity are motives explicitly referred to in the prayer of the Mass.

In this way, of course, the prayer of the Mass has a primary informative function in Catholic life. It is the standard upon which all the teaching on prayer within the fabric of the Church of Christ is judged. There never has been, and there never can be a teaching on prayer which is authentically Catholic and which is not in strict accord with the petition of the Mass. And, because the prayer of the Mass is a true petition, it cannot be considered as something apart from the rest of the fabric of the Christian life. As a petition, it is the expression of a desire, the desire of the Church of God. It is the manifestation of what the Church actually wants, and what she labors to bring about in the world and in the souls of her own children. It is the compendium, the living

and authentic declaration of the doctrine of Christ Himself.

The tradition of the Catholic Church tells us that the prayer of the Christian people is one prayer, one with the unity of the people of God themselves. The petitions which enter into the fabric of the prayer of the Mass are intended to incorporate and express the desire and the hope of all the Catholic people. Naturally, what the Church as an organization asks of God, is what the individual members of that Church ask and desire to have from Him. In the ancient liturgical books of the Catholic Church, the petitions which are found in the ceremonial and the pontifical of bishops, the breviary, and the ritual, were originally connected with the prayer of the Mass in one liturgical volume, the *Liber Sacramentorum*. Thus the prayer of the bishops, in the performance of those functions which are reserved to them by virtue of their office, the prayers which are said in the administration of all the other sacraments, and the petitions which constituted the official prayer of the ministers and the religious of the Catholic Church were viewed practically as an extension and an application of the central petitions of the Mass.

✠ C. This all-embracing petition of the Catholic Church, like the prayer of Christ, the divine Founder and Head of the Church, is intended to be expressed and manifested in an act of sacrifice. And so, in the prayer of the Mass there is integrated the great sacrifice of the New Law, the official act of the Catholic Church. From the theology of prayer which we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> it is apparent that it is by no accident that the sacrificial action is integrated into a background of petition. A sacrifice is something which of its very nature is meant to be expressive of

prayer and devotion. It is something which is meant to produce an effect which is petitioned in the act of prayer. In this respect, as in all others, the sacrifice of the Mass is a true and proper sacrifice.

Then there is more than an accidental relation between the sacrifice of the Mass and the prayer into which the sacrificial action is integrated. The sacrifice of the Mass consists formally in the consecration, and the words of consecration fit, in their proper place, in a perfect prayer which the Catholic Church offers to God as manifestive of its own desire. The action of the sacrifice is destined to cause the very goods for which the prayer of the Mass is a petition. The prayer is destined to have its effect only through the sacrifice. In other words, the hope, the desire, and the charity of every Christian are meant to be accomplished in that sacrifice which is integrated into the prayer of the Mass. When we pray, as individuals, we contribute to that corporate prayer of the Catholic Church which is expressed in the traditional formula of the Mass. All the prayer of Christians, then, is sacrificial prayer, petition which is meant to be expressed and made effective in the great sacrifice of the New Law.

A sacrifice is an action, strictly speaking an act, in which something is done to a thing offered to God in such a way as to express God's unique and supreme excellence. That action, according to the traditional and common teaching of Catholic theology, consists in the separate consecration of the body and the blood of Christ our Lord. The sacrifice is a sign or a manifestation, and that sign is completed when the double consecration has been perfected. The sacrificial action is something which the priest performs as the minister or the instrument of Christ, the great High Priest. It is the act of Christ as



the Head of the mystical body. The congregation, the Church offers that sacrifice through its priest insofar as it is the body of people chosen by Christ, and empowered to receive the Eucharist, and thus to make the sacrifice of the Mass its own.

✠ D. The same sacrificial action constitutes the form of a sacrament, the great and central sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. These sacrificial words are significant and effective. They bring about the transubstantiation. By their efficacy, the bread and wine over which they are said are changed into the body and the blood of Christ our Lord. By the reception of baptism a man is ordered and designated to the reception of that sacrament. It is the reality about which all the life of the Christian revolves. All of the other sacraments, all of the prayers and the acts of the Christian are directed to the fruitful reception of this sacrament of the Eucharist. The Christian lives and acts, and the Church exists and works so that men may receive the Eucharist and derive from it the benefits which God wills that they should derive from its reception.

The sacrament of the Eucharist consists, not in a passing act, but in an enduring sign, the species of the bread and wine insofar as these are affected and modified by the words of consecration. That in the Eucharist which is both a thing and a sign, the *res et sacramentum* of the theologians, is the body and blood of our Lord Himself. The grace which the Eucharist signifies and bestows as a sacrament is the grace of nourishment, the grace of union with Christ, the grace of charity. A person who receives the Holy Eucharist fruitfully receives an increase of habitual grace with the actual grace by which he will perform a more perfect and intense act of charity.



✠ E. Since, according to the plan of God, the prayer of the Church is intimately connected with the sacrifice of the Mass, and the sacrament of the Eucharist, we judge that prayer finally in terms of the Mass and the Eucharist. The Church, and consequently the members of the Church, desire and will the things which Christ desires and wills. She wills the eternal salvation and the spiritual perfection of those for whom Christ prayed and died. She knows that this benefit is something which can only be accomplished by way of prayer, something which will not be brought about otherwise than by God's help. She formulates that prayer, a petition to God for the very favors which Christ told her to desire and to petition. She has her own sacrifice, the Mass, the sacrifice and the proper act of the mystical body. That sacrificial action is integrated into the fabric of her official prayer, which in turn the Church considers as a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer.

A sacrifice is efficacious and acceptable to God in the measure in which it is sincere. It is sincere insofar as it is really expressive of the prayer and the devotion, and as a result, the charity of those who offer it. The sacrifice of the Mass is the sacrifice of the mystical body, and the sacrifice of Christ. As a result, it is always efficacious and acceptable insofar as it expresses the actual prayer and devotion of Christ. For now, in heaven, our Lord prays for us with a true prayer of petition. It is acceptable and efficacious as the act of the Church as a whole, because the Church is, and always will be the mystical body of Christ, the organism of which the Holy Ghost is the Soul, and the organization which prays as directed and moved by the Holy Ghost.

So far as the individual member of the Church is con-

cerned, his participation in the Mass will be more perfect as his prayer is more intense and ardent. The Mass is meant to be the expression of his prayer. Naturally the Mass is more perfectly his sacrifice in the measure that he is more perfectly devoted and prays more earnestly. The sacrificial action which is meant to signify and express his prayer is the form of the sacrament which he is ordered, as a Christian, to receive. That sacrament, through the body and blood of Christ which it really contains, is something which is intended to signify and cause an increase of his charity and, by implication, an increase in the perfection of his prayer.

Since all the other sacraments are connected with the Eucharist, it is evident that the prayer of the Church is not an agency which is supposed to be independent of the sacraments in the production of its effects. In and through the Blessed Eucharist, the prayer of the Church, and the prayers of the individuals who comprise the membership of the Church, are supposed to make our reception of the sacraments more fruitful and efficacious. And the Eucharist, and the other sacraments with it, act in such a manner as to increase the perfection and the intensity of the desire for the glory of God and for our salvation, and the prayer in which this desire is expressed.

✠ F. There is one last point which we must consider about the prayer of the Catholic Church. That prayer is a real petition, as is evident from the texts in which that prayer is expressed and contained. It is not in the nature of man to conceive or to express the full object of the desire of Christ and of the Church in any one act. As a result, in the official prayer of the Church, the object is, as it were, analyzed, and different aspects of it are presented in the various petitions which go to make up

the liturgical prayer of the Catholic Church. But, in its aggregate, the liturgical prayer of the Church asks God for all the benefits which Christ our Lord petitioned in His prayer, and to obtain which He died upon the cross of Calvary. Every petition of the Mass, the breviary, or the ritual expresses a petition which can be classified under one of the headings of the Pater Noster.

And, like every other developed petition, the prayer of the Church contains those integral parts which, on the authority of St. Thomas and the great theologians who have explained his doctrine, are the elements which go to make up the fullness of prayer. The prayer of the Church, each petition, ends with the recognition of the fact upon which the possibility of its fulfillment is based. Each prayer of the Catholic Church is explicitly cognizant of the fact that we ask the favors which we petition from God through Christ our Lord. We ask with confidence based, not upon any merit of our own, but upon the merits of our Blessed Lord. That is the *obsecration*.

Furthermore, the prayer of the Catholic Church incorporates a raising of the mind to God, insofar as He is the Source of the supernatural order, and insofar as He is the One to whom our petitions are addressed. The *oration*, the consideration of God as the Author of the supernatural order, is perfected in all the petitions of the liturgy, and especially in the reading of the psalms of David, which enters so intimately into the official prayer of the Catholic Church. St. Robert Bellarmine saw the supreme utility of the psalms as based upon the fact that they epitomize all the teaching of the Sacred Scripture.<sup>2</sup> They sum up all that God has revealed about Himself and about the recognition, love, and obedience

which He demands from men. That consideration is practical, as it must be to enter into prayer as a truly integral part. The only consideration of God which is of any value in the intensely practical work of prayer is one which thinks of Him as the object of a love that is strong enough to prompt a petition, and sincere enough to dominate our whole life. And that is the consideration which the Church finds in the psalms of David.

Furthermore, that oration, as it is found in the liturgy of the Church, includes readings from all the Scripture, and from the works of the great Fathers and the doctors of the Catholic Church. The consideration of God which He wills us to have in prayer is not something which is to be directed along the line of private interpretation. It is not something which is left to the whim of the individual, or to the fashion of the moment. The consideration of God which is expected to dominate our prayer is one which is based upon the revelation He has given to His Church, and upon the objective and traditional interpretation which the Church always has given and always will give to that revelation.

In the official prayer of the Church there is the *thanksgiving* which enters into a perfect petition. In the formulas of its prayer, the Catholic Church never ceases to recognize the graces which it has received as gifts of God. It never ceases to be mindful of His mercy. In that background, it manifests its desire, the desire of charity and hope, to God in the central act of *postulation*.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### THE PRAYER OF OUR LADY, THE SAINTS, AND THE ANGELS

A. Catholic prayer is by its very nature associated with, and dependent upon the prayer of the blessed in heaven.

B. The prayer of our Lady has a special connection with that of her divine Son.

C. The central prayer in the life of our Lady was the Fiat of the Annunciation.

D. The prayer of our Lady differs from that of the other saints and the angels in that she petitions for benefits which she has already earned by congruous merit.

E. The prayer of Mary is a cause of every blessing which comes to man in the supernatural order.

F. The prayer of the blessed is beneficial to the souls in purgatory.

G. It benefits men in this world.

H. It is resolved into the eternal prayer of thanksgiving.



✠ A. Christian prayer is not only something supported by, and united with, the prayer of Christ and of the Church as a whole, but it is something which is said in union with, and with the aid of, the Mother of God, the saints, and the angels in heaven. By the very fact that the Christian is a member of an organism and that he must act and pray as such, this union of our prayer with the prayer of our Blessed Lady and of the saints is something essential to Christian prayer. So, in considering the prayer of those in heaven, we are not thinking of a kind



of prayer different from our own, but of a prayer which is associated with ours, and from which ours is meant to derive its strength.

✠ B. In the first place, the prayer of our Blessed Mother has a place apart in the economy of our supernatural life. It is distinguished from the petition of the others among the blessed in heaven in both the manner of its efficacy and its extent. We can appreciate the prayer of the Mother of God only when we view that prayer in its proper perspective, as the prayer of the one who was and is associated with Christ in the work of the redemption. Just as the prayer of Christ was the cause of all the benefits which we seek from God in prayer, so those same benefits result from the prayer of our Lady, insofar as her prayer was joined with, and subordinate to the prayer of her divine Son.

As we have seen, the prayer of Christ was manifestive of the purpose of the incarnation and of the intention which motivated all His work and His suffering in this world. In the same way the prayer of our Blessed Mother was the expression of the desire which animated all her activity and of the purpose which she fulfilled in the scheme of salvation. Her act of co-operation in the offering of the sacrifice of Christ was the expression of that same desire.

✠ C. The great prayer of our Blessed Lady was the *Fiat* of the annunciation, the consent by which she became the Mother of God. Actually that act of consent was a true prayer of petition. A petition is the expression of a desire or a hope. Mary consented to become the Mother of Christ, not as constrained to this work, but freely, with all the willingness of which she was capable. The *Fiat* was not a mere permission, but the expression of a de-

sire or an intention. Mary actually willed that the message of the angel should be fulfilled. She manifested that desire to God as something which was to be granted by the power of God. That constituted her *Fiat* a prayer of petition, the most perfect prayer that ever has been offered or ever will be offered by any mere creature.

In the designs of God's providence, it was that prayer which gave Mary her dignity and place in the economy of salvation. She willed to become the Mother of Christ. An ordinary woman who consents to become a mother gives a real, though indeterminate consent. She wills to become the mother of a human being, but she has no means of knowing what sort of person that child of hers will become. The work which that child does in life, he does as the child of this mother, but her consent had no intimate or causal connection with the work he performs. It was otherwise in the case of Mary. Her *Fiat* constituted her as the Mother of Christ, the Son of God, the Mother of the One who was to free His people from their sins. She consented to be the Mother of One who was to free His people by offering Himself as a sacrifice of propitiation to God. She knew all the essential details of the activity of her divine Son. She knew, because God had revealed to her, not merely who Christ is, but what He was going to do, and how He was going to do it. She prayed for that, and the effect which Christ produced, as well as the incarnation itself, was, in the order of God's providence, made contingent and dependent upon her prayer.

That petition had its own ineffably beautiful integrity. The obsecration, the consideration or oration, and the thanksgiving which enter into the integrity of the perfect

prayer were expressed in that *Magnificat*, the hymn of praise, love, and thanksgiving which welled up out of her pure soul. The consideration of God as the One to whom her prayer was addressed was strong and practical enough to keep her, for all of her life, apart from even the slightest taint of sin. The loveliness of Mary's life, a loveliness which the words of the most brilliant of her sons could describe only in a stumbling and inadequate fashion, was the living expression of her prayer. The desire which she manifested to God in the prayer of the *Fiat* was a charity of such dazzling perfection that it made her life more perfectly beautiful than the life of any other creature. The pure beauty of that life can give us some understanding of her prayer.

✠ D. By her prayer she was constituted as the associate of Christ in the work of the redemption. He offered the sacrifice of Calvary. He was both Priest and Victim. It is neither exact, nor in accordance with the wishes of the Catholic Church to speak of her as a priest.<sup>1</sup> It was not her place to offer sacrifice. Her place in the economy of salvation is higher than that of the priest who sacrifices as the minister and the instrument of Christ. In the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass, the individual priest has a restricted part in the application of Christ's gifts to man. The Mass is repeated. But her work is something which has no such limited extension. By her co-operation with Christ, through her association with Him, an association which resulted from, and was manifest in, the prayer of the *Fiat*, she has an influence upon all men. There is no grace, no favor in the supernatural order given to men apart from her influence. She is the mediatrix of all graces. As the associate of her divine Son, she procured for man by way of prayer and what is called

congruous merit all that Christ Himself earned for man by strict justice.

The prayer of Mary, then, has this in common with the prayer of Christ, as distinct from the prayer of the angels and the other saints. The goods which she petitions and desires for men are the very goods which she merited from God (with congruous merit, rather than the merit of strict justice) by her association with Christ, and her co-operation, her subordinate co-offering of His passion.<sup>2</sup> Her compassion with Christ is the reason why these gifts are given to man. The other saints merited being heard by God, but their merit did not extend to the very gifts which they petition God to give to us. But Mary prays for the very gifts which she procured for man. She prays for the benefits which she merited by her association with Christ, though subordinate to Him, of course, in the work of the redemption.

✠ E. By virtue of her position she wills and prays distinctly and explicitly for every benefit which comes to man to aid him in the attainment of his salvation. Her causality in the supernatural order was and is universal. Her *Fiat* was an efficacious prayer for the incarnation, the sacrifice of Christ, and all of the benefits which came to man as the result of that sacrifice. She knows those benefits individually, she desires them and prays for them individually and explicitly. The saints, all of them, have what we might term a definitely limited causality in the supernatural life. They pray explicitly and individually for those benefits which pertain to them, for those on earth who in one way or another belong to them. It is part of traditional Catholic teaching that the saints, as a part of their accidental beatitude, know the conditions and the needs of those who pertain to them in any way. The



father of a family would know about his children. A bishop would know about his diocese and a pope about the Church as a whole. Out of the charity which animates them in heaven, they desire the spiritual benefits of which these individuals stand in need. For the rest, they have an efficacious but general love, desire, and prayer. They would know those who appeal to them in prayer individually. But the knowledge of Mary, and her prayer, must be distinct for each individual who has profited by the death of Christ.

✠ F. The saints in heaven naturally petition God in favor of the souls in purgatory. The love of benevolence which the saints have for the holy souls drives them to do whatever they can to aid these souls toward the attainment of their last end. The only means of co-operation open to the blessed in heaven is prayer. Hence the prayer of the blessed for the souls in purgatory and for us is something essentially connected with their status in heaven. As long as there is one soul, called by God to the eternal felicity of the beatific vision, who has not attained that vision, the prayer of the saints will be a powerful engine in the supernatural order, an engine the power of which is expended in the task of bringing men to God.

✠ G. Consequently the saints will petition God for the salvation of men in this world, and for the release of the souls in purgatory until the very end of the world. Until the very day of the general judgment, the petitions of the saints will be made, and will be efficacious for bringing men to God. These prayers will be efficacious in such a way that no man will attain heaven apart from the petitions of the blessed in heaven. The graces of conversion and perseverance are favors which God wills to give a man only in answer to the prayers of His friends in



heaven. But, with the entrance of the last of the elect into the courts of heaven, the need for petition will have passed. As we have seen, the souls in heaven are not meant to be the beneficiaries of prayer. They have all that they wish, they actually possess a beatitude too great for the human mind to conceive. There is nothing which we could procure for them, there is nothing they could procure for themselves.

§ H. It is in this respect that we see the function of thanksgiving as that part of prayer into which ultimately the petition is resolved. The petition, which centers around the postulation, or the expression of a desire as long as there is something which we still must receive from God, will end in an eternal hymn of gratitude. They who have petitioned God on earth, and who from heaven have won salvation for other men by the force of their petition will have forever their glorious song of thanksgiving. "To Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb: benediction and honor and glory and power forever and ever."<sup>3</sup> The prayer of the saints is now and always will be a petition in which thanksgiving plays a part of primary importance. The first two petitions of the Our Father will find their realization in the kingdom of heaven.

In heaven the saints petition the glory of God, not as something toward which they tend, but as something which is realized in them. Their petition that God be glorified and that His holy name be sanctified is an act of thankful recognition of God's mercy to them.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### PRAYER AND THE HOLY SOULS

A. The teaching that the souls in purgatory can pray in our behalf dates from the late thirteenth century, and is put forward by many competent theologians as a probable opinion.

B. St. Thomas Aquinas is generally considered as the most prominent exponent of the teaching that the souls in purgatory are not capable of praying for us.

C. The terminology of St. Thomas indicates that up to his time there was no serious attempt to assert that the souls in purgatory pray for us.

D. St. Thomas shows that this inability on the part of the holy souls is due to their position in the supernatural order. His teaching was explained ably by Joseph a Spiritu Sancto.

E. The teaching that the souls in purgatory pray in our behalf is not properly theological.



✕ A. We could not round out the teaching of the Catholic Church on prayer without considering the possibility of prayer on the part of the souls in purgatory. Such possibility is disputed among Catholic theologians. Most manuals of theology carry the assertion that the souls in purgatory can pray for us, but this statement is generally put forward merely as a probable opinion. Richard of Middleton, a thirteenth-century Franciscan theologian, was, so far as we know, the first to publicize this teaching.<sup>1</sup> Richard considered prayer as something which necessarily followed upon charity, in the sense that a person with charity was, by that very fact, able to pray. Juan de

Medina took the same position in the early part of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Some of the more influential theologians of the early seventeenth century, notably St. Robert,<sup>3</sup> Suarez,<sup>4</sup> and Sylvius<sup>5</sup> adopted this view, and it was through their writings rather than through the books of the earlier proponents of the theory that this doctrine found its way into so many modern texts.

Until the time of the thirteenth century, the evidence for the opinion that the souls in purgatory do not pray, with an act which would be prayer in the strict sense of the term, is negative rather than positive. During the first centuries of Catholic history there was no teaching that the souls in purgatory were in any condition to pray either for themselves or for us. The point which the Church always stressed was that the holy souls were in a condition which demanded prayer for them, and one of the reasons alleged was always that these souls were incapable of helping themselves.

✠ B. While there were certainly others, both contemporary with, and anterior to St. Thomas Aquinas, who held and taught explicitly that the souls in purgatory are not capable of performing the act of prayer, still it is a fact that the Angelic Doctor is always taken as the proponent of this teaching. Richard of Middleton did not cite St. Thomas, but, as Father Theophorus notes in his well-written article in the *Ecclesiastical Review*, he used the very words of Alexander of Hales and St. Thomas as objections against his own view, objections which in the mind of Father Theophorus at least, Richard demolishes neatly. Juan de Medina acknowledged that "Thomas seems to say that they [the souls in purgatory] do not pray for us." Nevertheless, he says, *salva pace*, this teaching does not seem altogether certain, and, as a matter of

fact it is probable, as far as he [Juan] is concerned, that they do actually pray for us.<sup>6</sup>

St. Robert Bellarmine did not find the reasons alleged by St. Thomas convincing.<sup>7</sup> Sylvius, unwilling to depart from the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, simply claimed that he should not be interpreted as saying that the souls do not pray when he teaches that they are not in a condition to pray.<sup>8</sup> But throughout the very interesting history of this question, St. Thomas is recognized as the chief proponent of the objections against the possibility of prayer on the part of the souls in purgatory, and most generally it has been recognized that such prayer is incompatible with the theology of prayer as he advanced it. Those who have denied that the souls in purgatory actually pray have advanced the reasons of St. Thomas.

As a result, then, if we wish to know the traditional teaching on the possibility of prayer on the part of the souls in purgatory, we must go to St. Thomas himself. The work which contains the definitive teaching of the Angelic Doctor on this point is the *Summa Theologica*. St. Thomas did not devote an article to this teaching: He deals with the question in an objection and in the response to that objection against the authentic Catholic teaching that the saints in heaven pray for us.<sup>9</sup> The context of the objection itself, as well as the manner of the response, show very clearly the status of this teaching in the orthodox circles at the time of St. Thomas.

✠ C. The objection reads, "As the saints in heaven are superior to us, so also are the souls in purgatory, since they are incapable of sinning. But those who are in purgatory do not pray for us, but rather we pray for them. Therefore, neither do the saints in heaven pray in our behalf."

That objection would have been devoid of any meaning if among the university men among whom St. Thomas wrote the opinion had been accepted that the souls in purgatory could pray for us. Actually the attitude of Catholics was such that the statement that the prayer of the saints involved prayer by the souls in purgatory could stand as a serious objection. "The souls in purgatory do not pray for us, but rather we pray for them" was, and still is the expression of accepted Catholic teaching on this point. The very fact of that objection, altogether apart from the response which St. Thomas made to it, is indicative of the fact that in his time there was no serious attempt to teach that the souls in purgatory prayed for their friends on earth. This is a negative argument, but it is conclusive. It is an indication that, in the time when the *Summa* was being written, there was no serious or considered teaching that the souls in purgatory actually exercise the causality of prayer.

The objection itself says nothing about the explanation or reason for this statement. It indicates a fact, the fact that it was not Catholic teaching that these souls pray for the living. Furthermore it indicates that, in the mind of St. Thomas at least, there were no principles of faith in which the teaching that the souls in purgatory actually pray for us is contained, either virtually or implicitly. Since theology deals with virtual revelation, with those truths which are contained in the doctrine formally revealed to us by God and proposed by the Catholic Church, with truths, the elaboration and expression of which help us to understand and appreciate more perfectly the meaning of that which we accept on divine faith, a teaching that the souls in purgatory actually pray for us has no place in the fabric of theology.



✠ D. In his response, St. Thomas gives the reason why we do not attribute prayer to the holy souls. "Although those who are in purgatory are superior to us in that they cannot sin, they are beneath us because of the punishment that they are suffering. For this reason they are not in a state for praying, but rather in a condition where prayer is offered for them."

Joseph a Spiritu Sancto contributed to Catholic theology one of the best and most objective commentaries on this passage in St. Thomas. He shows very clearly that this inferiority of the souls in purgatory with respect to their brethren in this world is something essentially pertinent to the matter of prayer.<sup>10</sup> While these souls are confirmed in charity, in such a way that they never will, and never can fall from grace, they are at the same time in a state which is caused precisely by actual sin which they themselves have committed. They are in purgatory in order to undergo the cleansing punishment by which they can be purified and rendered fit to enter into heaven. That satisfaction, that punishment endured in order to wipe away the remnants of actual sin, is the sole reason for the existence of purgatory. At the same time it is the sole business, the only affair of the soul in purgatory.

As a result, the soul that is occupied exclusively with being purified from these remains of sin, in the sense of expiating the temporal punishment which is due to sin it actually committed, and which was not entirely expiated in this world, is not in a condition to exercise the active causality of prayer. So it is fitting that this soul does not perform the prayer of petition. We must not forget that prayer is essentially a cause, a cause ordered in the decrees of divine providence for the attainment of those favors which would not be obtained except through

the act of prayer. The soul that is not in a position to exercise that causality would not be in a condition to pray. That inability to exercise active causality in the supernatural order is precisely an aspect of the suffering of purgatory.

Obviously the souls in purgatory desire their own entrance into heaven, and they will the salvation of those on earth, and the things which those on earth need, or could use, in the attainment of their salvation. But, as we have seen, prayer is something distinct from mere desire. Prayer belongs to the practical intelligence. It is a causal act. Desire belongs to the will. Prayer is precisely the operation of the practical intellect in which the creature expresses its desire to God in such a way as to dispose the thing it desires to be caused by God. There is no evidence that God has disposed that the souls in purgatory should be able to cause actively, by prayer, the things that they desire. Consequently, there is no indication that the souls in purgatory make that petition. If God has not ordered the life of the Church in such a way that the souls in purgatory are to exercise that causality, then any petitions they would make would not be petitions of fitting things from God.

✠ E. It is common Catholic teaching that the souls in purgatory are not able to help themselves, that is, to exercise any active causality in their own behalf. That is the reason which makes prayer for them on the part of the members of the Church Militant so imperative. Neither is there any positive indication to lead us to believe that they can exercise that active causality in behalf of others. We might say that in this case we are free to hold either opinion. However, this teaching does little benefit to theology. The science of theology contains

only those truths which are contained in the deposit of revelation. At best, we could say that the teaching that the souls in purgatory are able to pray is not in direct contradiction with the established teachings of faith. The fact that many reputable theologians have held this teaching shows, clearly enough, that it is a respectable opinion. But even an opinion as respectable as this one has little place beside the legitimate conclusions of Catholic theology.

Since the time of Richard, the proponents of this teaching have loftily pointed to it as "more pious." Joseph a Spiritu Sancto rightly criticizes this assumption. It is very difficult to see how an opinion which has such a tenuous objective foundation could be called pious in any sense of the term. Certainly it is not endowed with any quality of theology. It is definitely not pious to insert into the text of the queen of all the sciences a statement which is not contained in the teaching of revelation. And, even from a practical point of view, it seems questionable to allow a teaching like this to be put beside the doctrine on the great mysteries of our faith. There is always the danger that people will be led to believe that either this is as well founded as the legitimate theses of theology, and is to be received as certain Christian teaching, or that all the rest of theological teaching rests on equally tenuous foundations. It is well to know that the opinion that the souls in purgatory pray for us is something which is not drawn directly from the dogma of the Catholic Church, that it is merely an opinion, and that it is not legitimately a part of theology.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### VOCAL AND MENTAL PRAYER

- A. Prayer can be either vocal or mental.
- B. Liturgical prayer must be, and private prayer can be vocal.
- C. Vocal expression of the petition is meant to engender and augment devotion in the person praying.
- D. The vocal expression of prayer renders to God the service of the human voice as well as of the intelligence.
- E. Vocal expression can result from the very intensity of the act of prayer itself.
- F. The petition of prayer as a whole, and the second part of the petition in particular can be made fittingly apart from any vocal expression.
- G. The classification of mental prayer includes mystical contemplation.
- H. Mental prayer is meant to be joined with vocal prayer.



✠ A. After we have seen the teaching of the Catholic Church about those who are able to pray, we pass to the consideration of the conditions which govern our own prayer in this world. It is Catholic doctrine that prayer, the petition of fitting things from God is an activity which can, and in certain cases must, be expressed orally or vocally. At the same time it is an activity which can be performed without any external expression whatsoever. In other words, prayer can be either vocal or mental. Both mental and vocal prayer have their own importance and their own place in the economy of Catholic life.

The division of vocal and mental prayer is proper; it



is a division of prayer and not of petition. Any petition is an act of the practical intelligence, but a petition addressed to a human superior is something which must of its very nature be expressed externally, in order that the person to whom it is addressed may have cognizance of it. It is quite evident that the reason for vocal prayer must be something different. Prayer is not vocal because the one who prays thinks that without external expression God would not know his desire. Prayer is something which is of benefit to man himself, and some prayer is vocal because the external expression of the petition is something which is of benefit to man in certain cases.

✠ B. In the first place, there is some prayer which, of its very nature, must be vocal. That is the common prayer of the Catholic Church, the corporate petition of the people of God. The prayer of the Church is the act of a society, an act of which the sacrifice of the Mass is the effective expression. As such it is a petition which certain men, marked with the priestly power, say for the Church as a whole. "It is fitting, then," as St. Thomas writes, "that the common prayer which is offered by the ministers of the Church in the persons of the entire faithful people of God should be made known to that people for whom it is said. This could not be done if the prayer were not vocal."<sup>1</sup> A society, like the Catholic Church, can make a common petition insofar as that petition is expressed externally in a formula. The social nature of man makes it fitting that such a community act should be manifest sensibly.

But, even apart from the liturgical prayer of the Catholic Church, some of the petitions made to God by the men in this world should be vocal. It would be unbecoming and rash for any person, in any state of perfection



whatsoever, to expect to dispense himself entirely from the work of vocal prayer. That is the fact, and St. Thomas has pointed out the very definite reasons why it is a fact. They are reasons which are based on the theology of prayer itself, seen in its proper perspective of Catholic doctrine. They are reasons which give us a profound insight into the Thomistic teaching on prayer.

✠ C. The first reason why vocal prayer is sometimes requisite is definitely psychological. External, vocal expression is given to prayer in order that the interior devotion of the one who prays may be sustained and augmented. Prayer is certainly an act of the intelligence, but man is so constituted that his intelligence does not act ordinarily apart from the operation of the senses. Consequently it is possible to increase the perfection of prayer in the measure that the body of man, and his senses are occupied with the business of prayer. Since the co-operation of the body in the work of prayer, through this vocal expression, is meant to bring about a better intellectual activity of prayer, it contributes by that very fact to the perfection of that devotion which prayer itself is meant to augment within us.

In this reason Catholic doctrine takes cognizance of the place of the body, and by implication of material things in general, in the scheme of salvation. The Church has always protested vigorously against any teaching which attempted to picture man as a sort of spirit imprisoned within a body, a body which was essentially a hindrance to the attainment of human perfection. The life which we live as the adopted children of God, the life of which habitual grace is the source within us, is one in which the body itself has a part. Far from being merely an obstacle in the way of attaining the perfection of the

life of grace, the body is expected to make its own contribution. Man is not a pure spirit. He is a rational animal, a being whose very nature is composed of body and soul. The activity of man is an activity to which both of these elements contribute.

Although both body and soul enter into the operation of man as such, they do not enter as equal factors. The body exists and acts for the sake of the soul. It is meant to be and to operate in such a way that through it the being and the activity of the soul are perfected. Psychologically, a man can concentrate on the activity of prayer more fully if he expresses his petition in words. Thus vocal prayer is absolutely requisite in the first stages of the spiritual life. But even as a person advances in the life of grace, and concentrates on mental prayer, the vocal expression of prayer still retains its value. It is something which is always good, and which has its place even in the life of the highest spiritual perfection.

✠ D. The second reason why vocal prayer is sometimes requisite is deeply theological. Prayer, as we have seen, is an act of religion, an act in which man renders to God the service which is due to Him because of His supreme excellence. Now, the service or the tribute which is due to God is not merely a service of the mind, but a service of the body as well. There is no atom or fiber of our being of which God is not the First Cause. The voice of man should enter into this work of service, and the way in which it pays its tribute of praise to God is by the expression of the prayer of petition. As we have seen there is no such thing as a prayer of praise, as something distinct from the prayer of petition. The prayer of petition itself is an act of religion, an act in which we testify to the supreme excellence of God. We give God the tribute

of our lips and of our voices when we express orally this prayer of petition.

St. Thomas notes that this reason is particularly imperative when we regard the satisfactory value of prayer. The works which we perform under the influence of the supernatural life have the power, not only of earning our eternal salvation, but also, under certain conditions, the power to expiate the punishment due to sins which have already been forgiven. This satisfactory value is attributed to works insofar as they are penal, external works performed under some conditions of difficulty. Man is expected to satisfy the justice of God by the performance of works which involve the activity of the body as well as that of the soul.

✠ E. The third reason for the existence of vocal prayer is again psychological, and at the same time based upon one of the most important phases of spiritual doctrine. The life of habitual grace, of which prayer is meant to be the expression, is something which is destined to grow in intensity. With the intensification of the life of grace, the prayer which is the expression of that life becomes itself more perfect and strong. Now, it is natural in the life of man that intense spiritual acts should manifest themselves in a sensible way. In other words there is a real mutual causality by which the activity of the senses contributes to the perfection of the acts of the intellect and the will, and these acts in turn, having attained a certain perfection, tend to manifest themselves externally.

It is only natural, then, that a man should give oral expression to a prayer of great intensity. And this reason is valid precisely because man is expected to have and to enjoy this intensely perfect prayer. The life of habitual grace in this world is governed by the law of progress. It

is meant to develop and to increase in perfection throughout the course of our earthly sojourn. The vocal prayer, which is meant to inaugurate and maintain the progress of prayer becomes itself the result of the perfection of that progress. Vocal prayer, then, is not only compatible with the highest stages of Christian perfection, but it is something which is demanded by the very conditions of that perfection.

The only caution which Catholic theology adds to this teaching on vocal prayer is a commentary on the words of our Lord: "But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee."<sup>2</sup> Our Lord did not condemn vocal prayer or public prayer in that admonition. All that He denounced was that prayer which was said merely that it might be heard by other men, and thus contribute in some way to the reputation of the one who made it. Vocal prayer, whether public or private, remains a petition addressed to God. The vocal expression is something which is meant to be a contribution to, or the resultant of the perfection of prayer itself.

✠ F. There is also a very definite place for, and need of mental prayer in the spiritual life. We call that prayer mental which is not expressed vocally in any way. Even the prayers of the Mass, which are said in a low voice, like the secret prayer and the canon, are vocal prayers. But, because prayer is a petition made to God, it can be contained entirely in the mind itself. The term "mental prayer" might refer to the process of prayer as a whole, but as a matter of fact it usually applies to one of the parts which enters into the integrity of prayer, the oration.



As we have seen, prayer, as a petition, is composed of certain integral parts. The liturgical prayers, like the Collect of the Mass, contain all four of these parts. One of these parts is the act in which the soul addresses itself to God, considering Him precisely as the One to whom the petition is addressed. This is a raising of the mind to God, a practical consideration which is meant to contribute to the perfection of the prayer as a whole. Now, it is obvious that this consideration, summed up in a few words in the liturgical prayer, can be extended to the private prayer of the individual. The individual Christian can make this practical consideration of God which is ordered to petition, and this consideration will necessarily be integrated into the process of his prayer. That consideration, tending to the appreciation of God insofar as He is the One to whom our petitions are addressed is mental prayer.

Thinking about God in such a way as to arrive at this practical appreciation which is ordered to petition is meditation. This meditation is an act which should call into play all the resources of our human nature, and all the advantages of our intellectual culture. It is an exercise which is judged as most advantageous, and even necessary for the attainment of perfection. Obviously it contributes in no small way to the perfection and the efficacy of our prayer. That prayer is more perfect as the desire of which it is the expression is more intense and more practical. The consideration of God, to whom we pray, and who is, in the last analysis, the Object of our petition is an act which, of its very nature, tends to intensify that desire.

✠ G. According to the ordinary laws of the development of the spiritual life, there comes a time when the natural



process of human reasoning, utilized in meditation, is no longer adequate to bring about the appreciation of God which He desires the soul to possess. Then, after the soul has passed through the purifying experience which He in His mercy sends to it, God may grant to the soul the favor of contemplation. This consists in an experimental and intuitive awareness of God as present within the soul, but an awareness of God precisely insofar as He is possessed in faith. This passive or infused contemplation is the highest form of mental prayer which the soul can have in this world.

In passing from the most methodical procedure of meditation to the loftiest peaks of infused contemplation, ordinarily the soul passes through many degrees of mental prayer. But all of them together are meant to be integrated into the Christian life, and into the Christian prayer of petition. They contribute, each in its own way, to the perfection of the petition which we make to God for the things which are fitting. They go to increase the strength and the efficiency of that act which is the cause by which man attains the end of eternal life for himself, and obtains it for those who are bound to Him in the ties of charity. In this way, looked upon as entering into the integrity of prayer, mental prayer contributes to the glory and the service of God.

✠ H. There is no reason, of course, why the mental prayer of meditation should not contribute to the perfection of a petition which itself is expressed orally. There is one standard by which the use of oral or external expression is judged with reference to mental prayer. Words vocally expressed are useful in prayer to the extent that they aid in the perfection of the essential work of the intelligence. When the vocal expression is

such as to distract the mind from the prosecution of the work of prayer itself, then the vocal expression is to be abandoned.

Thus, while mental and vocal prayer are really distinct, they are not meant to be separated one from the other. Each contributes in its own way to the perfection of the Christian life. In the prayer of the individual Christian, mental prayer has the highest place. Vocal expression should be given to prayer in the measure that this contributes to the perfection of the petition itself. But the life of the individual is not meant to be isolated from the life of the Church. And the mental prayer of the individual Christian is something which is meant to be summed up and expressed in the perfect petition of the Catholic Church, and ultimately in that everlasting sacrifice which is integrated into its liturgical prayer.

It is of utmost importance to the Christian to appreciate the practical and social implications of this mental prayer. We cannot begin to appreciate the exercise of meditation until we see this act as contributing to the perfection of the petition in which the intention of our own lives is manifested to God. And the contemplation of a St. Teresa was perfectly integrated into a prayer which expressed a perfect charity.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### THE REQUISITE ATTENTION

A. Some sort of attention is required for vocal prayer.

B. Vocal prayer cannot exist without at least the attention requisite for the proper pronounciation of the words of which the prayer is composed.

C. Attention to the meaning of the words or to the purpose for which the prayer is said, is requisite for the full enjoyment of all the benefits of prayer.

D. Such attention throughout the recitation of the prayer is not absolutely necessary in order to derive the meritorious value from vocal prayer.

E. Neither is it absolutely necessary for obtaining the benefits which come from prayer by way of impetration.

F. Such attention is necessary, however, in order to obtain the spiritual consolation which should come from prayer.

G. An intention to pray implies a willingness to guard against distractions.



✕ A. The fact that there is such a thing as vocal prayer brings with it the problem of attention. Vocal prayer consists in the oral and external expression of a petition which is itself an act of the practical intelligence. We know, unfortunately all too well, from experience that it is possible for a man to recite or read a formula while thinking about something which has nothing at all to do with the meaning of the words he recites. Naturally this wandering of the mind can take place under circumstances other than those of prayer. But we are con-

cerned with attention only with reference to prayer. The Church, has a competent and objective teaching on the necessity of attention for the validity of vocal prayer.

Attention is an act of the mind in which it fixes itself upon one object to the exclusion of everything foreign or irrelevant to that object.<sup>1</sup> Then a man pays attention in the act of vocal prayer when he actually thinks about the matter which is expressed in the words he is reciting. Catholic theology distinguishes three ways in which attention can be paid to the object and the meaning of prayer.

The first kind of attention which can have reference to prayer is that in which the mind is fixed upon the formation of the words themselves, in order that the words may be rightly pronounced. The second kind is that in which the mind considers the actual meaning of the words which are proffered. The third is that in which the end or the object of prayer itself is considered, in which the mind considers God as the One to whom the prayer is said, and the eternal life which we seek to possess through the causality of prayer. Although these three forms of attention to prayer can exist apart from one another, they are by no means mutually exclusive. When a man thinks at the same time about the meaning of the terms which he employs in prayer, and the purpose of that same prayer, he is not trying to consider two disparate and separate entities together. One of these naturally is ordained to the other, and the consideration of the meaning of the words is in itself a help rather than a hindrance to the consideration of the purpose of prayer.

✠ B. This first form of attention, that in which the mind applies itself to the proper pronunciation of the words, is an absolute minimum. For, if a man is not thinking

about the meaning of the words of prayer, if he is not actually considering the meaning and the object of prayer, and at the same time does not even take the trouble to pronounce the words objectively, it is evident that there is no prayer at all. There are, according to Marcellus a Puero Jesu,<sup>2</sup> three elements which enter into this type of attention, the awareness of the object (in this case the pronunciation of the words), the tension of the activity of the person knowing toward this object, and finally the inhibition of awareness of other things which would of their very nature distract from this knowledge. Thus, in the case of attention to the pronunciation of the words in vocal prayer, the subject must avoid any sort of activity which would stand in the way of this sense awareness. Without this attention there could be no truly vocal prayer.

It might happen, of course, that in private prayer a man would find the very force of the consideration of God in the act of prayer an impediment to proper attention to the words in which his petition is expressed to God. In this case, he is, of course, to turn to mental prayer, and to disregard the vocal expression. For the rule, which we have seen dominating the theology of prayer, applies to this case. The prayer is something which is ordered for the benefit of the man who offers it. Apart from any other consideration, as in the case of public or liturgical prayer, the pronunciation of the words is ordered to the perfection of the prayer itself, in order to increase the devotion of the man who prays. When the external expression of this prayer is an impediment and a distraction in the way of the object of prayer, then it is to be left aside, if no other reason stands in the way.



✕ C. The necessity of the second or the third type of attention is another problem altogether. The person praying is actually attentive in this way when, throughout the vocal prayer, he is cognizant of the meaning of the terms employed, or at least he thinks about the object for which the prayer is said. There is a way in which this sort of attention may be called requisite. This actual attention is necessary in order to derive from prayer all the good which God enables us to take from it. For the full perfection of vocal prayer it is obvious that a man should attend to the meaning of the formula during the entire time he is reciting it. To put this truth in another way, every distraction in vocal prayer is something which takes away some of the benefit which we should otherwise derive from that prayer. In other words, these distractions are to be avoided as much as possible. We are to plan against them, and not to be content with them. In itself, even an involuntary distraction deprives us of some of the fruits of prayer.

But, if actual attention to the meaning of the prayer as long as the formula is recited is requisite for the attainment of the full perfection of that prayer, it is not necessary for the prayer's validity. A prayer can be valid, that is, it can produce the results which follow from prayer as such, even if we do not consider the meaning of that prayer throughout its entire recitation. But it cannot be valid as a prayer apart from any consideration of the meaning of prayer whatsoever. There must obviously be some consideration of the meaning of prayer, some act of the intelligence of which this formula is the expression, connected with the recitation of the formula.

With regard to this matter, we can distinguish three ways in which prayer brings about an effect. There is

the causality of merit, which prayer has in common with any other act informed and motivated by charity. In order to merit or earn eternal salvation a man does not have to be continually attentive. Merit is something which does not require this attention. It is sufficient that the meritorious act be performed under at least the virtual influence of charity. Then a man does not have to perform an act of charity during all the time he prays in order to obtain the effect of merit. It is sufficient that he continue to pray because of an intention which he made under the influence of charity.

✠ D. Then, in order to merit, a man must be attentive to prayer at least when he makes his intention. He must intend to say this vocal prayer because he loves God, if he is to obtain any merit from the recitation of that vocal prayer. Intending to say this prayer, he knows what a prayer is. Intending to say it out of the love of God, he intends to say it as it should be said, that is, as the expression of a petition formed within his own mind. Then the man who merits heaven in the saying of a vocal prayer is attentive at first to the meaning of prayer, and has the intention of remaining attentive throughout the saying of the prayer. If his mind wanders to the consideration of other things, this is in spite of his intention. It is something which he does not wish. The recitation of the formula is carried on by reason of the intention which has not been recalled, and which is still in force. There is no actual attention to the meaning of the prayer. But there is virtual attention, because the recitation of the words is carried out under the influence of an intention to pray properly, an intention to continue the actual attention throughout the recitation.

✠ E. Second, in order to receive a benefit in answer to

prayer it is not necessary that the soul should actually be attentive throughout the recitation of a vocal prayer. But it is necessary that there be an intention to pray, and consequently to attend, so far as possible, to the meaning of the words used in the prayer. The goods which God gives to man in answer to prayer are benefits which He wishes man to have, and to have precisely as things which are desired and asked for from Him. In order that this condition may be fulfilled, the first attention is sufficient.

Vocal prayer has an impetratory value as long as the words are actually recited because of an intention to pray. There is virtual attention until such time as the person praying admits a voluntary distraction. As long as he is deliberately willing to think of something else, to occupy his mind with a business foreign to prayer, a man is not reciting a formula out of any intention of prayer. When a voluntary distraction is once admitted, the words of the vocal prayer cease to have any effective connection with the original intention, and the person is no longer virtually attentive. Once this voluntary distraction is admitted, the prayer ceases to have any impetratory power of its own.

✠ F. In order to receive the third effect of prayer, to experience the spiritual consolation which is meant to result from the act of prayer itself, the man who prays must be actually attentive. The spiritual consolation is attendant precisely upon the activity of the mind in prayer, and apart from that activity it is not to be had. Vocal prayer itself is, of course, no obstacle to the attainment of this benefit. But it is had only while the person is actually attentive to the meaning of the words employed in that vocal prayer.

However, as Sylvius is careful to point out, we are not to leave off prayer or judge our prayer as ineffective simply because this spiritual joy is not experienced in the saying of it.<sup>3</sup> The fact of the matter is that while the spiritual consolation which is attendant upon prayer never comes except while the person is attentive to the meaning of vocal prayer, it is not always experienced by those who pray with the proper attention. For, in His mercy, God sees fit to deprive the soul of this consolation, sometimes for long periods, in order that the soul may be purified and may love prayer for His sake, rather than because of any sweetness which is experienced in the act of prayer.

✠ G. The problem of attention to vocal prayer must be seen in its proper background. Involuntary distractions will come during the recitation of vocal prayer because the human mind is prone to these distractions. "The human mind cannot remain (without interruption) on the consideration of lofty things," said St. Thomas, "because of the weakness of its nature, for the soul is drawn down by the weight of human infirmity to lower things. Therefore it happens that when the mind of a man who prays rises up to contemplation, it is suddenly distracted by some infirmity."<sup>4</sup>

But distraction is not meant to be the rule of vocal prayer. The recitation of the words in which that prayer is expressed is meant to be a means for keeping the mind regularly on the consideration of the meaning of the prayer itself. The way to avoid many distractions is precisely to use the words, and to try to gather the tremendous meaning of those formulas which the Church of God gives to us to convey our petition to Him.

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## CHAPTER XX

### PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

A. The command of our Lord that we should pray without ceasing indicates the connection between prayer and charity.

B. Perpetual prayer may be considered as the entirety of a Christian life, lived in harmony with the petition of prayer.

C. The proper duration of an individual act of prayer is measured by the power of that act to excite or increase devotion.

D. Prayers for any object are to be repeated as long as the desire for that object endures, until that object is attained, or until the will of God on this matter has been made known.



✕ A. As Sylvius puts it, there are three distinct ways in which we can envision the problem of perseverance in prayer.<sup>1</sup> First, we can consider the meaning of the command of our Lord that we, His followers, are to pray always. Second, we can determine the length which is fitting for the individual act of prayer. Finally, we can look at the necessity of repeating our petitions for a certain object over a long period of time, sometimes over the entire course of our lives, and sometimes until the will of God has definitely been made known to us with regard to the good which we have sought.

We must realize that there is a definite command, given by our Lord to us, that we should pray always.<sup>2</sup> That command is repeated by St. Paul in the injunction that we are to pray without interruption.<sup>3</sup> These are not merely approximate statements. First of all, of course,



these commands show us the necessity for making our petitions to God frequent enough to color and motivate all the course of our lives. Obviously they do not mean that a man is to spend the entire time God has given him on earth in formally expressing petitions to God for fitting things. But there is a deep-seated reason why our prayer should be called, and should really be incessant. That reason is to be found in the theology of prayer itself.

Prayer is the petition of fitting things from God. As a petition made to God, it is valid and existent as long as the desire of which it is the expression actually exists or operates. The desire of which Christian prayer is the expression is the desire of Christian hope, motivated and finally determined by charity. Then as long as that charity endures, the petition which expresses it can be said to endure. The man who has the virtue of charity has the intention and the desire which are conveyed in prayer. The petition itself, as we have seen, is ordered to the perfection of a man's devotion, and ultimately to the fullness of his charity. It is for the benefit of man rather than God. Consequently the command of our Lord that we should pray always is an order that we should never allow the virtue of charity to be extinguished within our souls.

That command of our Lord is, as it were, the ultimate seal upon the Catholic theology of prayer. He willed us to pray always because in the last analysis prayer is something inseparable from an active charity, and something without which the soul will not regain a charity which it has lost through mortal sin. Charity, as a sincere love of God, a love of benevolence and friendship, will drive us to perform the work by which God is served, and at

the same time the glory of God, which is to be accomplished in the work of our salvation, is procured. Charity, which impels us to labor for our neighbors and even for our enemies will not permit us to cast aside the one means without which God will not grant them the favors which He wills them to have through us. A man who has charity will pray, and conversely the prayer is the expression of that charity. Loving God always, with the sincere love of charity, we pray always to Him.

At the same time, prayer is something requisite for the soul that tends toward justification. Ordinarily God does not grant forgiveness to those who do not ask for it. Thus prayer is always necessary, precisely because charity itself is necessary. In the man who prepares to be forgiven by God prayer is the expression of his desire for the life of habitual grace. In the man who is in the state of grace, prayer is the expression of a charity that is meant to endure forever.

✠ B. There is still another way in which the theology of prayer helps us to understand this teaching of our Lord. As we have seen, prayer is a petition, and composed of certain definite parts. One of these parts is the *oration*, the lifting up of the mind to God to consider Him in order to the petition itself. This consideration of God, or thinking about Him, naturally demands a certain amount of preparation if it is to have its full effectiveness and perfection. To consider Him as we should, in the order of prayer, it is necessary that we avail ourselves as far as possible of the instruction which the Catholic Church offers us about Him. Furthermore, it should never be forgotten that a man is successful in any intellectual line in the proportion that he is prepared and disposed for the acquisition of this knowledge. In

the cases of the consideration of God for petition to Him, this means practically that a man will understand what God wishes Him to understand in this way in the measure that his mind is not burdened by the weight of affection for worldly things.

In this way, a good life, the life of grace and charity is, as it were, a requisite disposition for the perfection of prayer. The petition which we make to God is an act which is important enough to demand the full co-operation of our lives. We pray always, in this way, when we so live our lives as to be able to think of God more effectively and perfectly and so to pray with greater power. We pray always when our entire lives are lived in the order and the direction of our prayer.

✠ C. The individual act of prayer, however, is something which occupies a limited time. The individual petition which we make to God for the things which are fitting is meant to be conducive to the devotion of the person who prays. Consequently, the individual prayer is meant to last as long as it contributes toward our devotion. That is the standard by which we are to measure the proper length of the individual act of prayer. There is a point of saturation in the activity of the mind in this world. There is a point at which the utility of an individual study session ends, that is when the student is no longer able to advance in the understanding of his matter by further study because he is too tired to profit from further activity along this line. In the same way there is a point beyond which the practice or the individual act of prayer itself is no longer useful or efficacious in the spiritual life, and that is the point beyond which the prayer could not be other than tiresome.

We must not allow ourselves to lose the exactness of

that teaching. The individual act of prayer should not be continued beyond the point where it could not be other than tiresome. That is not at all the same thing as saying that a prayer should be discontinued at the point at which it begins to require a special effort. As a matter of fact, prayer is of its very nature an act which involves a great deal of difficulty in this world. It is an act which requires effort, one of those acts which have a special aptitude for the work of satisfaction, as penal acts. The standard for the continuance of the individual act of prayer, then, is devotion rather than difficulty. The individual prayer should continue as long as that prayer is fitted and able to increase the devotion within us. Beyond that point it ceases to realize the purpose which is intrinsic to prayer, and it has no reason for existence.

St. Thomas distinguishes carefully between that prayer which is a community exercise, and the prayer of the individual in this regard.<sup>4</sup> The prayer of the individual is measured by his own devotion, and the duration of the individual community prayer is measured by the intensity of the devotion of the community as such. As a result, from a practical point of view, community prayers are meant to be shorter than the prayers of individuals. The liturgy of the Roman rite is built up on that principle. The concise prayers are heavy with meaning, and so constructed that they are admirably adapted for perfecting the devotion of those who use them. Individual acts of prayer should be short enough to intensify the desire and the devotion of the Christian people. It is for this reason that, since the time of the Fathers of the desert, the Church has used and recommended the ejaculatory prayers, like those which enter into her own litanies.



In the case of prayers said by individuals, it is fitting that they should be long enough to draw out the meaning which is contained in the act of petition itself. The human mind is rational rather than purely intellectual. It acquires the appreciation and understanding it comes to possess. A person should be willing to force himself to spend enough time on the practice of prayer to allow prayer to produce the effects which it is meant to bring about in our lives. This, of course, is particularly important when we look upon prayer as a means for advancing in the life of perfection. The prayer which is incumbent upon those who wish to advance in the life of grace is a prayer long and serious. The rules of the various religious orders and communities approved by the Catholic Church give detailed orders for prayers of some length to be recited by the members of these orders. The code of canon law indicates that a minimum of one-half hour each day is to be spent in the practice of mental prayer by clerics. With the current lack of emphasis on the supernatural, it is easy to exaggerate, and thus to misconstrue the teaching on the limits of prayer. Like every other teaching, this one must be looked upon in its proper perspective. Prayer is an exercise of such dignity and importance that it is worth all the effort that man can put into it. Prayer for a half hour or even an hour at a time is under no circumstances to be considered as too long for the individual. Except in extraordinary circumstances, a man can derive spiritual profit from prayer of that length. It will be difficult, but it will not be such that it cannot be productive of increased devotion.

✠ D. Finally there is the question of the repetition of petitions for any given object. Perseverance is in this sense one of the conditions required for effective and



proper prayer. The reason for this is to be found in the nature of prayer itself. Prayer is the expression of a desire or an intention. Naturally it is perfect and efficacious in the measure that this desire is sincere. The endurance or the perseverance of a desire is a measure of its sincerity. An act of the will, as distinguished from an act of the sense appetite, is something which is meant to endure. The will tends to a certain end and wishes means for the sake of attaining that end. In the case of prayer, a person seeks the end of eternal life, in which the glory of God is found, and looks for all other things insofar as they contribute to the acquisition of that end.

If that act of the will does not persevere, it is not effective. Perseverance in prayer is certainly essential for the actual attainment of the end for which prayer itself is instituted. The act of the will is the source of the acts of all the other faculties. The entire activity of man is used in the attainment of the object of prayer. The act of the will which dominates and uses all the rest of human activity is the desire which we manifest to God in prayer. If that desire is strong enough to be efficacious, it will be strong enough to bring us to pray frequently. Hence, to be effective, prayer which expresses and contains that desire must be repeated frequently. It must persevere.

The same principle holds true with regard to prayer for something regarded as a means to the end of salvation. We receive such favors insofar as they are the object of true prayer, and insofar as we really desire to have them. A strong desire for these favors will involve frequent prayer for them. The continuance of the prayer is again a measure of the strength of the desire which prompted the prayer. To be successful as a prayer, a peti-

tion must be motivated by a desire strong and intense enough to bring about repeated recourse to God.

Perseverance in prayer for favors which are means to the end of eternal life is measured by the nature of the favor sought. There are those favors, like an advance in perfection, and the grace of final perseverance, which are means without which this end will not be obtained. Then we should continue to pray for them as long as we live. There are others, as temporal blessings, which are contingently helpful in the attainment of our eternal destiny. These should be asked for until the will of God has been made known to us in this regard. If we have sought health, we are to pray for it until such time as we have been cured, or until we have realized that it is in the designs of divine providence that we should not recover. That perseverance is a mark of the desire we have for the thing for which we pray.

The difference between a petition addressed to a creature, and prayer is shown in the case of perseverance. The frequent repetition of a petition by the same person for the same favor can be tedious to a human superior. It can militate against the granting of the favor which is sought. But repetition of prayer to God brings us into ever closer intimacy with Him, perfects the soul, and renders that soul better disposed to receive the favor it asks from God.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CONDITIONS OF PRAYER'S EFFICACY

A. There are four ways in which prayer can be said to produce an effect.

B. Prayer can bring about a spiritual joy in the soul of the one praying.

C. Prayer can have a satisfactory value insofar as it is penal and motivated by charity, or connected with the sacrament of penance.

D. Prayer is meritorious insofar as it is motivated by charity in this world.

E. While all prayer can achieve an effort by way of impetration, that which is endowed with four definite characteristics will infallibly obtain its object. The first of these conditions is that the prayer be said for oneself.

F. The second condition, and one which is required for all effective prayer, is that it be offered for something requisite for salvation.

G. The third condition, also attached to all effective prayer, is that the petition should be pious.

H. This piety implies that the petition be enlightened by supernatural faith.

I. It must be an indication of theological hope.

J. It must be motivated by a love of benevolence for God.

K. It must be humble.

L. The fourth condition is perseverance.



✕ A. There are, we have seen, four ways in which prayer can exercise causality, four ways in which it can bring about an effect beneficial to man. It can be the cause of spiritual comfort or sweetness which the soul enjoys in

the act of prayer itself. It can be satisfactory for the punishment which is due to past sins, meritorious of eternal life, and impetratory of the goods which are asked of God in prayer. The last of these ways, that of impetration, is proper to prayer. It is the way in which the thing which is the object of the petition is caused.

✠ B. There are certain definite conditions under which these effects are received through prayer. For the enjoyment of that spiritual consolation or comfort, attention to the meaning of vocal prayer is necessary. It is something which is meant to be produced in mental prayer. However, there are times when God does not give it to the soul who practices mental prayer, or who is attentive to the meaning of vocal prayer. In purifying the soul, and making it ready to live a life of perfection, God usually withdraws the spiritual consolation which would otherwise be enjoyed in prayer, in order that the soul may learn through bitter experience to pray for His sake alone.

The fact that this spiritual consolation is not found in prayer might be due to the fact that God is purifying this soul. It might also be due to a carelessness on the part of the person who prays. Naturally, there is little comfort to be gained from the mechanical recitation of a vocal prayer, and still less from a halfhearted attempt at meditation. There is very definitely a joy which comes from devotion, and this is the joy or comfort which is meant to proceed from prayer.<sup>1</sup> That joy follows upon the consideration of God's goodness, insofar as He is the One in whose service the soul dedicates itself promptly and generously in devotion. That consideration belongs to the activity of prayer. It is one of the parts which are meant to make up the integral petition of prayer. It like-

wise follows upon the consideration of our own weakness, insofar as this weakness is to be relieved by the help and the power of God. As such it is not an unmixed gladness. The soul is saddened by the consideration of its own unworthiness and its own actual infidelity. But it is a joy which transports the souls of the servants of God, a joy which made the great saints dislike to be taken away from the activity of prayer.

In other words, the essential condition for the attainment of this consolation is that prayer should be devout, that it should be offered by one who is actually prompt and generous in offering himself in the service of God. In order actually to obtain this consolation the devotion should produce this consideration of God's goodness and this practical reminder of our own hope in Him. When this condition is not fulfilled, the joy which should follow upon devout prayer is not realized.

✠ C. Prayer can also produce the effect of satisfaction. It satisfies the justice of God, and thus expiates the punishment due to sins which have already been forgiven insofar as it is said out of charity, or insofar as it is attached to the sacrament of penance. Vocal prayer is of itself more perfectly adapted to accomplish the end of satisfaction than that which is purely mental. It must be noted that any prayer offered to God out of a motive of charity has this satisfactory value precisely insofar as it is a difficult or penal work. A prayer which is said as a penance, a prayer which is enjoined by the confessor as a work of satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to the sins which have been forgiven in the sacrament of penance, partakes of the sacramental efficacy. It has a special satisfactory power, connected with the power of the sacrament itself.<sup>2</sup>



✠ D. Prayer has also the power to merit an effect, the effect of eternal life. It has this power in common with all those acts which are performed under the influence and at least the virtual direction of charity. The subjective basis of this power of merit is the charity of the person who prays, precisely insofar as that charity brings about the prayer. St. Thomas notes that prayer is an act of the virtue of religion which, insofar as it is meritorious is caused by charity, and which presupposes faith and humility in the person who prays. Then, since charity is inseparable from the life of habitual grace, the person who is in the state of grace alone can merit heaven and an increase in the life of grace through the act of prayer. In other words a man who is not in the state of habitual grace can have no reward which is due in justice to prayer. His prayer does not earn any benefit from God. But the man who prays in the state of grace, and whose prayer is influenced by charity in the sense that he prays because he really loves God with this love of benevolence, performs an act to which the joy of heaven and an increase in the life of habitual grace in this world are due in justice. The man who is in the state of grace, and whose prayer is motivated by charity, cannot only receive these benefits on the title of God's mercy, that is, because he has asked for them, but can possess the same eternal good on the title of justice, because he has performed a work to which this good is due in justice by the order of God Himself.

✠ E. All of these three methods of causing are common to prayer and several other works of the spiritual life. There is one way of causing which is proper to prayer itself. Prayer has this distinct power, to secure a good as something which is asked of God, and which would

not be had unless it were asked of Him. That is the power of impetration. To obtain a favor from God in this way, it is only necessary that the definition of prayer should be fulfilled, and that a man should make a petition to God for fitting things. But there are certain circumstances under which prayer will infallibly obtain the good which it seeks to have from God. The traditional theologians, after St. Thomas Aquinas, have summed up these conditions under four headings. In order to procure its effect infallibly by way of impetration, a prayer must be said for oneself, petitioning things which are necessary for salvation, piously and with perseverance.

It must be noted that the condition that prayer be said for oneself is necessary in order that prayer may always or infallibly be efficacious. It is not by any means necessary in the sense that any prayer said for another is not fruitful. Holy Scripture and the history of the Church are replete with instances in which an effect was procured for another by the force of prayer. The petition of the dying St. Stephen brought the Church the inestimable blessing of the apostolate of St. Paul. The unceasing prayer of St. Monica resulted in the conversion and the sanctity of Augustine. And, as a matter of fact the charity which ultimately commands and motivates prayer makes it imperative that we should petition for the good of others.

The point of this teaching is that, while prayer for others is commanded and in general is effective, it is not infallibly efficacious because the beneficiary of the prayer may present an obstacle to the favor which is asked from God for him. A man has absolute control over only his own soul. It is within his power, by virtue of the sufficient

grace which God gives to him, to persevere in the state of grace, or to return to the life of grace as he wills. When he prays in his own behalf, he is thereby disposed for the reception of the favors which God wills that he should have as the effect of prayer. But another can refuse the grace of God, and can withhold from being disposed for the reception of the gifts of God. This point in the teaching on prayer is only a declaration that God has not given to any creature absolute and infallible power over the soul of another, even to return that soul to the life of habitual grace. The power is there, but it is not a power that is infallibly efficacious.

✠ F. Again, prayer is always successful when the object of the petition is something which is necessary for the attainment of our salvation. If a favor we have asked in prayer is not received, it is a sign that this favor was either not petitioned properly, or that the thing asked was not actually necessary or conducive to the affair of salvation. As we have seen, a thing may be necessary for the attainment of eternal life in two ways. It may be something like the life of grace itself, or final perseverance, which could not fail to be conducive to the attainment of our final end. Or it may be something in the order of a temporal good which, while it could be harmful to us, actually, in the designs of God's providence, is ordered to aid us in our journey toward heaven.

There may, of course, be some question about this second class of objects. If a man prays for some temporal favor, and does not receive it, it is probable, or at least possible, that this particular good is something which God wills he should do without in the affair of his salvation. It is ordered that he should obtain eternal life without this particular object. But, in the case of those things

which are necessarily conducive to salvation, prayer can always be successful. If a good of this order is not obtained for oneself by way of prayer, it is an infallible indication that the prayer has not been said as it should. In other words, the best and the most important gifts which man can possess in this life, the goods of the supernatural order which are directly and immediately conducive to his eternal life, are things which he can always procure for himself through the proper exercise of the activity of prayer. If a man lacks any essential good in the supernatural order, it is because he has neglected a means by which he could infallibly procure that good. He has been remiss in the activity of prayer.

✠ G. The third condition for the infallible efficacy of prayer is called piety. This is a condition which we must be very careful in describing. In the first place it is obvious that it is not in any way synonymous with the state of habitual grace. A sinner can infallibly obtain the remission of his sins through the act of prayer, though not, of course, independently of the sacrament of penance. A man in the state of mortal sin can ask God for the grace of forgiveness, and can have those sins forgiven when he is willing to do what God Himself has ordered him to do. It is part of the divine plan that sins committed after baptism should be forgiven through the sacrament of penance, and that sins committed before baptism, and original sin itself, should be remitted in the sacrament of baptism.

The piety of prayer takes this into account. The man in the state of sin has evidently not the life of grace, but he asks for something which pertains to the life of grace, and the piety of his prayer is thereby measured and constituted. The condition of prayer which we call piety,



the condition which makes a prayer infallibly efficacious in procuring the benefit which is sought in prayer is a disposition whereby the creature seeks from God the things which he should have.

✠ H. Considering the composition of this piety in prayer (for it is a complex thing), we find that the fundamental requisite is supernatural faith.<sup>3</sup> In order to pray properly a man must base his petition upon an act in which he assents to the teaching of God because of the authority of God who has revealed that teaching. Faith is, of course, necessary for those who do not actually enjoy the beatific vision. Prayer is an activity in the supernatural order, an activity by which man exercises a causality in that order. It is necessary then, in order that he should act, that he have a knowledge proportionate to the end for which he is working. That knowledge will either take the form of the ineffable clarity of the beatific vision, which, of course, he would not have if he himself were working toward eternal life, or that of faith. Without faith there is no operation in the supernatural order, in this world. Prayer requires belief.

This faith is, of course, the acceptance of the entire body of divine revelation, insofar as this is known to the one performing the act of faith. But acceptance of the fact that God is able to give us all that we demand in prayer is particularly requisite in the case of petition to God. Our Lord showed the necessity of this belief when He said, "Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you."<sup>4</sup> The faith which is requisite for the proper exercise of the act of prayer involves an explicit acceptance of God's promises to answer the prayer of faith.



¶ I. The second condition which goes to make up the disposition of piety in prayer is hope. Obviously prayer in this world would be impossible apart from the act of hope. The petition which we make to God in prayer is the expression of a desire for God as our ultimate Good, and as a Good which we are confident that we can have because of the power and the willingness of God Himself to endow us with it. It must be understood that hope is something more than a simple desire. Hope implies a confidence in and a reliance upon God Himself. The good which is desired in hope and petitioned in prayer is a good which is considered as something which is possible of attainment only because God in His mercy and power chooses to procure it for us. St. John wrote of this hope in relation to prayer: "And this is the confidence which we have toward Him: That, whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us. And we know He heareth us whatsoever we ask: we know that we have the petitions which we request of Him."<sup>5</sup>

¶ J. The third condition which enters into this piety is an efficacious and benevolent love of God, a love of God which is strong enough to influence us to observe His commandments. For those in the state of habitual grace, that love is the love of charity. For those who are not in the state of grace, and who are being disposed to return to the life of grace, that love is the initial love which enters into the acts of the soul which prepares to return to God, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent. There is a love of God, which is a love of benevolence, and thus distinct from hope, and which is performed before the infusion of habitual grace, and thus is distinct from charity. That love consists in a willingness to render to God what belongs to Him. It is a love

of benevolence, an effective love which influences the soul to renounce sin. For the man who prays for the grace of conversion, such a love is required. And a prayer is pious in a man who is outside of the state of grace insofar as it is motivated by that love.

✠ K. The last act which enters into the condition of piety essential for successful prayer is humility. This is the act in which a man, considering his own shortcomings, holds himself on the lowest plane. It is the act by which man keeps himself in his proper place with regard to God. It is an act which can be judged in function of the sin which is opposed to it, the sin of pride. Obviously it is a necessary element for prayer because prayer as a petition addressed to God demands in the one praying a conviction of his own helplessness and unworthiness, and a willingness to be subject to God. Apart from that humility prayer cannot be successful.

✠ L. The final condition required for the infallible efficacy of prayer is perseverance. Since prayer is the expression of a desire, that prayer cannot be judged efficacious if the desire is not strong enough to influence man to continue in petitioning to God. Prayer is not intended to be a magic formula. It is the expression of a man's life motive, and as such it obtains from God the favor for which it asks Him.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### THE THEOLOGY OF MEDITATION

A. The teaching of theology on meditation is of practical value.

B. Meditation is meant to be an integral part of prayer.

C. While methodical meditation is not requisite for salvation, it is ordered as a means for advancing in the spiritual life.

D. The principles upon which meditation is based are to be found in Catholic theology.

E. Meditation demands a remote preparation.

F. Meditation is essentially discursive, leading to a practical and supernatural conclusion.

G. Meditation is meant to proceed from the consideration of the sacred humanity of Christ.

H. Meditation is ordered to the destruction of sin and its sources, and to the more intense practice of the Christian virtue.

I. The traditional methods of meditation are based on an adequate theology.

J. The method of St. Sulpice is perfectly adapted to the theology of prayer.

K. The Ignatian method is perfectly integrated into the petition of prayer.



✠ A. The teaching of the traditional theologians, that prayer is essentially a petition of fitting things from God, and a petition which may be composed of four integral parts, has a tremendous practical value when it is applied to the problem of meditation.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to deal adequately with meditation if we think of it as an exercise separate from and independent of the prayer of

petition. Such inadequate treatment is unfortunate from a speculative or scientific point of view. It is even more regrettable in its practical effects. An inadequate notion of meditation is a serious handicap to the man who wishes to practice meditation. Failing to see the essence and the intrinsic purpose of this exercise, the beginner will be deprived of definite practical aid in the making of his meditation.

Meditation always requires an appreciable amount of effort. Inherent difficulty arises both from its intellectual and its supernatural character. It would be unfortunate if some extrinsic source of difficulty should stand in the way of its full and perfect accomplishment. A teaching on meditation which neglects the essential definition of prayer and the consequences of that definition can be the source of such trouble. For that reason an outline of the traditional theology of meditation should be of practical benefit.

Meditation is a practical consideration of God insofar as He is the object of prayer, a consideration which is made according to the natural human manner. Since it is a consideration arrived at according to the natural human manner, meditation is a process of reasoning. Moreover, since the sense faculties exist and operate for the sake of the reason, meditation can and should involve the activity of these sense faculties which should contribute toward the perfection of the reasoning. And, since the activity of man in this line is something which admits of discipline, meditation can and should be carried on according to a definite procedure, through which the end of meditation may be more effectively procured. The end of meditation is practical. Consequently there is no method of procedure which would be valid to the

exclusion of all others. The value of a method would be judged according to the utility of that method in bringing a man to accomplish the end for which the exercise of meditation is ordered.

✠ B. As a practical consideration about God, meditation is integrated into the petition which constitutes prayer. The reason or the perfection of that second among the integral parts of prayer is realized in the act of meditation. However, the concept of mental prayer, in this sense, the consideration of God in line of prayer is wider than the concept of meditation. All meditation properly so called is mental prayer, but not all mental prayer is meditation. The reason, of course, is that there is a kind of consideration of God in the line of prayer, a sort of practical awareness of God which is not arrived at by human means at all. This consideration which is supernatural in its manner as well as in its object is the awareness of infused contemplation. God has it in His power to grant a man a cognition of Himself in the order of prayer which is more intimate and perfect than any which could be obtained through the natural exercise of the human reason, even when that natural reason works upon truths which are themselves essentially supernatural.

As mental prayer, or *oration*, as a reasoned, practical consideration of God in the order of prayer, meditation contributes to the perfection of a petition by nourishing and increasing the devotion which is the immediate principle of prayer. It is only natural that a man will be more promptly and generously willing to give himself to the service of God in prayer when he is more perfectly aware of God's goodness and power. Since the strength and the effectiveness of prayer are proportionate to the sincerity



and the power of the desire of which the prayer is the expression, meditation contributes to the fullness of the petition insofar as it is meant to increase the intensity of this act of the will. It is in this way that meditation is predominantly and essentially a practical consideration.

✠ C. Contributing to the perfection of prayer as it does, meditation, as a distinct exercise, is not strictly necessary for the attainment of salvation. However, it is morally necessary for the attainment of Christian perfection, for the ordered growth of the Christian soul in the life of habitual grace. Consequently, meditation as an exercise is incumbent upon those who are called upon to follow the paths of perfection. It is an exercise which is integrated into the very fabric of the religious life. It is obligatory for the priest, whose high office demands, although it is not directly ordered to, the attainment of perfection. Meditation is so requisite for the full and successful living of the priestly life that Pius X wrote in his "Exhortation to the Catholic Clergy" that "there is no priest who can neglect this without a serious note of carelessness and danger to his soul."<sup>2</sup> So necessary is meditation in the pursuance of the ideal of perfect holiness that the theologians have always considered it dangerous and presumptuous to neglect it in the attainment of perfection. Meditation is one of the activities characteristic of the first stage in the progress of the spiritual life. Meditation is so intimately joined to growth in the life of grace that it must inevitably tend toward that growth. When it does not result in increased intensity of charity it is not being performed properly. This ultimate purpose of meditation must necessarily enter into and influence the theology of mental prayer.

✠ D. The object and the procedure of meditation are, of

course, determined by its purpose, and its place in the economy of prayer. First of all, by reason of its object, meditation is an important activity, a work worth preparing. As a work which is requisite for advancement in perfection it is only fitting that those who are particularly anxious to advance in perfection should try to meditate as well and as effectively as possible. Because it is a form of reasoning, the effectiveness of meditation will be proportionate to the excellence of the principles upon which this reasoning is based. These principles obviously will consist in the doctrines of the supernatural order, the truths which God has revealed to us about Himself, and which are proposed for our belief by the Catholic Church.

Taking care to make our meditation as effective as possible, it is only natural that we should avail ourselves of an adequate and authentic presentation of those principles. For this reason Vallgornera sees spiritual reading as an ordinary prerequisite for meditation. The raising of the mind to God, or the consideration of God in an affair as important as that of prayer demands the best teaching on God that is available to us. It requires us to use the human means which would ordinarily be employed in an affair of serious proportions. And it is natural that a man should avail himself of the instruction which is best suited to him, an instruction which is contained in those books which treat of Catholic doctrine. Spiritual reading is an activity really distinct from meditation, but at the same time it is intimately connected with it. A man could not make a full and personal meditation out of a book, because meditation is essentially a practical activity. But at the same time the use of a book of Catholic doctrine is ordinarily a prerequisite for effective meditation.

The book which is adapted above all others for use in this spiritual reading which is directed toward meditation is the book of Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture is recommended for this function precisely insofar as it is a theological source, the word of God which contains divinely inspired teaching about God. But, it is important to note that here, as elsewhere, the Scriptures are to be used according to the objective interpretation which the Catholic Church has given to them. The Scripture is a source of Catholic teaching, and the doctrine of the Scripture is to be used in spiritual reading for the purpose of meditation as Catholic doctrine.

Practically, this means that books of theology, in the measure that they are truly and strictly theological, are particularly fitted to be used in this spiritual reading. Catholic theology gives the teaching which is contained in Holy Scripture as that teaching is interpreted authentically by the Catholic Church. Furthermore it explains that doctrine, by drawing out the implications and the virtualities which are contained in it. A book is acceptable as an aid for meditation in the measure that it contains, and explains adequately, this authentic Catholic doctrine.

There are points contained in even good books of theology which are of no practical import for the purpose of meditation. Such a point, for example, is the opinion advanced by many eminent theologians about the possibility that the souls in purgatory may pray in our behalf. But actually such teachings are not a part of the fabric of theology as such, they are not parts of the science of theology. Any teaching which is a part of theology, any objective and certain explanation of revealed doctrine which enters into the fabric of the science can

be of service in the work of meditation. It is a certain teaching that God is properly the subject of theology. In other words, all other things enter into the science of theology insofar as they have reference to Him. Practically this means that there is not a conclusion in all the science of theology which cannot be of service in helping us better to know God as He is the object of prayer. There is not a part of the proper teaching of theology which will not give us the basis for a proper consideration of God, the practical raising of our minds to Him in the order of petition.

Although all of the content of the science of theology can and should be valuable for spiritual reading in the line of meditation, those portions of the teaching which deal immediately with the truths which enter into the determination of prayer are most directly fitted for this spiritual reading. Among these truths are those which have reference to the motive of prayer, the reason upon which we base our confidence that our prayer will be answered. Prayer is answered, not out of any merit on the part of the person who prays, but because of the mercy of God, a mercy which is manifest in the work of the redemption. As a result that teaching of the Church which has to do with the mercy of God, and the mysteries of the incarnation and the redemption is of primary importance in the spiritual reading that is directed to the perfection of meditation. But, as a matter of fact this consideration is not meant to be merely speculative, it is something which should motivate activity in the line of the desire which we express to God in prayer. As a result the spiritual reading for meditation should include the Catholic teaching on the spiritual life. Meditation is ordered essentially to an increase in spiritual perfection.



The course of progress in the life of grace is not something which is left to the whim or the originality of each individual Christian to imagine or describe. There are definite series of acts which enter into the progress of the soul in the line of Christian perfection. By meditation the soul is meant to tend toward this progress. It is helpful to the individual meditating to know the authentic Catholic teaching on this path to perfection.

Practically, then, there is no one book which would fulfill all the requirements for a book of spiritual reading. The texts for this spiritual reading coincide with the works which a Catholic, avid for spiritual perfection, would read. A man is expected to read religious books which are up to the standard of his own cultural capacity. One with a good cultural and scientific background should read works on the Catholic doctrine written from this same cultural and scientific point of view. Books which are sentimental rather than theological can be of little use generally in the fostering of meditation.

✠ E. Vallgornera insists that another, a more remote preparation, is also required for the full perfection of a meditation.<sup>3</sup> Since meditation is a practical and intellectual task, it is something which should be taken up under the proper conditions. An effective willingness to live the Christian life is the disposition required to make any progress in the line of meditation itself. With this willingness and generosity of spirit, a man is prepared to derive real profit from his spiritual reading and to accomplish the end which he sets for himself in the work of meditation.

This willingness is the act of devotion, the very act which the process of meditation is meant to augment and to perfect. With this two other acts are mentioned by



Vallgornera as contributing to the perfection of meditation in the way of a preparation. These are fullness of faith and cleanliness of heart. The faith of a man who sets out on the path of perfection must be intense and firm. And the cleanliness or purity of heart is the natural result of the will to perfection which inspires a man to meditate.

The traditional theology gives us ample instruction on the procedure of meditation, instruction founded upon the fact that meditation is a part of prayer. The senses, and in particular the imagination, can serve as instruments of meditation. They should be so employed as to contribute toward the activity of the reason itself, in which meditation consists formally. Moreover in a work as important as this, it is expected that we should utilize every resource available to reason itself. All of the mental discipline which we have acquired can contribute to the fullness of meditation.

✠ F. As for the procedure of meditation, it follows from the nature of the act itself. Meditation is an activity in which the mind arrives at a practical appreciation of God in the order of prayer. It involves a consideration of some truth about God Himself. The reason acts in such a way that this consideration of God influences and motivates some efficacious resolution of ours with reference to our advance in the life of grace. It is in this way that meditation differs from the study of theology on Christian doctrine. The meditation is a part of prayer, and it is essentially and immediately practical in character. Any consideration of what the Church tells us about God, or even of the Catholic teaching on the spiritual life would not be a meditation unless that consideration were actually ordered to the effective desire or intention which is in

harmony with the desire of prayer. The principles of meditation are strictly theological. Meditation cannot have any great value except insofar as it is based on the divine revelation, which is accepted on faith and explained in the science of Catholic theology.

Precisely because it is an act of reasoning, meditation is something complex. It involves the passing from the consideration of one truth to that of another. This consecutive consideration of truths is not an aimless activity. It is ordered to a certain definite conclusion, the effective judgment of the practical intelligence which commands the intention or resolution of activity in harmony with progress in the spiritual life. But that conclusion or judgment which is made as the result of meditation is freighted with all the meaning and the perfection of those considerations which have led up to it in the process of meditation. For example, a man finishes his meditation with the effective and sincere resolution to overcome one particular fault by the use of certain definite and determined means. But that is a decision which he makes because of the love of God, and motivated by His consideration of His ineffable goodness. The intentions which animate and motivate our progress toward perfection are expected to be decisions which are themselves enlightened and perfected by the content of Catholic teaching, by that science which is subalternate to the science of God and of the blessed.

✠ G. Every meditation, then, resolves itself into a consideration of the motives upon which our activity in the supernatural order is based, a consideration of our own immediate and practical needs in the life of perfection, and finally in an effective judgment of the practical order by which we establish and focus our intention with

regard to growth in holiness. The motives are those which faith gives to us and which theology expounds and explains. They are the teachings about God and about Jesus Christ our Lord. The masters of the spiritual life are insistent upon the fact that the sacred humanity of Christ and the passion are most effective and proper subjects of meditation. This is true not only for the beginning of the spiritual life, but during the entire course of man's progress toward perfection. At no stage, however lofty in the scheme of spiritual advancement, can the meditative consideration of the sacred humanity of Christ be considered out of place or useless.

According to the wording of Vallgornera, the mysteries of the humanity of Christ constitute the principal subject on which meditation is to be made.<sup>4</sup> This frequent meditation of the benefits which God has granted us through the mysteries of that sacred humanity is a true and secure way of perfection. But the meditation must be practical in order to constitute a part of prayer. We consider these mysteries of Christ in order to mortify our own passions and to imitate in our own lives the perfections and the virtues of Christ.

It is proper for the human mind to arrive at a full cognizance of any object by way of reasoning, by passing from the consideration of one truth to that of another. As a result in meditation a man is expected to consider all of the Catholic doctrine on God and on the sacred humanity of Christ which is available to him. This extended consideration will lead obviously to a more adequate concept of Catholic teaching, and thus to a knowledge which is better qualified to form and influence our devotion. For this reason there are such things as books of meditation which take in the entire content of theo-

logical doctrine. For this same reason works of theology like that of Contenson, and in our own times that of Lahitton, can point out in every phase of Catholic dogma the aptitude for meditation.

✠ H. The practical application of meditation is guided in general by the Catholic doctrine on the spiritual life and its phases. Meditation is a necessary part of the activity of the soul in its advance toward Christian perfection. Distinctively meditation is an exercise of the first part of the spiritual progress, that portion of the Christian life which is known as the *via purgativa*. Now the *via purgativa* is that portion of the Christian life in which the predominant practical concern is the eradication of sin and its traces. The proper purifying exercise of this portion of the spiritual life is active mortification. Since prayer is expressive of the desire which animates and informs the Christian life, the prayer of the soul in the *via purgativa* should be concerned practically with the destruction of sin within the soul by way of active mortification. And, since meditation is directed toward the end of prayer into which it is integrated, the meditation which belongs to the prayer of the *via purgativa* should be directed toward the enlightenment of the soul in the line of that same active mortification.

Pre-eminently, then, meditation is directed and ordered to the extirpation of sin and its effects and principles within us. In this we see the truth and the practicality of Vallgornera's teaching that the consideration of the sacred humanity of Christ in meditation should be directed to the mortification of our passions. The consideration of Christ supplies us with a motive for looking into our own lives to see what is keeping us apart from Him, and for an efficacious, practical, and sincere deci-



sion to remove these obstacles which stand in the way of our progress toward Christ. Naturally, then, meditation will have all of the characteristics of that action which is primarily practical in nature. A meditation is not a success if it ends in a mere general approval of virtue and displeasure with sin and imperfection, even if that sin and imperfection happen to be our own. A thing is practical in the degree in which it is particularized. Actions are individual, and a resolution is effective from the practical point of view in the measure in which it affects individual acts and individual failings. If, for example, I see that this particular quality is something which is out of place in one who is called to be a member of Christ, and an adopted son of God, I shall realize that this quality manifests itself under certain definite circumstances. I shall decide to take certain immediate and practical steps which will prevent any such undesirable acts, not in general, but in the peculiar circumstances under which these acts have always appeared. That immediate and direct application to the removal of sin by the process of depriving ourselves of some comfort or pleasure is the measure of the practicality and the effectiveness of a meditation.

This practical preoccupation of meditation is not merely something negative. It is ordered toward the suppression of sin and the sources of sin within us in order that we may live the life of grace more perfectly and fully. The extent of that life of grace is pointed out in the various Christian virtues, under the heading of which Catholic moral theology deals with the various acts which make up the Christian life. For this reason the various books which are meant to be used in the process of meditation sum up the teaching of the Church on these vir-



tues. Furthermore these virtues are to be considered practically, that is, as they are to be performed by this individual man under these very definite and determinate circumstances. Naturally, over a period of time a man will meditate upon all these virtues insofar as their practice is incumbent upon him.

✠ I. The two principal methods of meditation available to readers of the English language take this theology of meditation into consideration, particularly if they are considered as they are described by the proper masters of the spiritual life. It is only natural that there should be definite methods of meditation. The practice is too important to be left altogether without practico-practical directions for its proper accomplishment. But we cannot exaggerate the harm that is done when meditation is looked upon merely from the point of view of method. The method is valuable here as elsewhere when and in the measure that it is seen as the practical and definite means for the accomplishment of a definite end. It is far more important to realize what meditation is, and how it enters into the fabric of prayer, the petition of fitting things from God, than to memorize all the points which go into the formation of a meditation according to any of the received methods. As a matter of fact the man who does not realize the purpose and the nature of meditation as it is described and treated in the traditional writings of the theologians will derive very little practical profit from a method of meditation.

✠ J. The method of meditation which is called that of St. Sulpice is obviously one which utilizes all the theology of prayer, and which tends to the end which the traditional theology insists is the purpose of meditation. This method includes a remote and a proximate prepara-

tion. The remote preparation is, as Tanquerey points out, designed to put a man's life in harmony with the purpose of his meditation.<sup>5</sup> In the method of St. Sulpice this remote preparation involves a preparation of the meditation the evening before it is made. It calls also for care that no thoughts which would distract from this meditation should be allowed to intervene between the planning of the exercise and its accomplishment. The immediate or proximate preparation is made at the beginning of the meditation itself. It consists in the placing of ourselves in the presence of God, acts of contrition, and a petition that the meditation should be effective and fruitful.

The body of the meditation consists in three points. The first is called the adoration, or according to Tanquerey, *Jesus before our eyes*. In this point we consider some virtue in our Lord or in one of His saints, and make the proper affective response to that virtue. The second point is called the communion, or *Jesus in our hearts*. This consists first of all in the conviction that we need this virtue, then in the reflection on our conduct, with sorrow for the past, confusion for the present, and desire for the future. This resolves itself into a petition for this particular virtue, which it is in the power of God to give us. Thus in the Sulpician method of meditation the exercise is properly integrated into prayer, the petition of fitting things from God.

The third point of the meditation made according to this method is the co-operation, or *Jesus in our hands*. This consists in the formation of a practical, and for that reason a particular resolution, and the joining of that resolution to the intention which guides our spiritual examen. In this resolution that conclusion of the medita-

tion as mental prayer, as an integral part of the petition of prayer is accomplished. This resolution is a firm and practical intention to act under the immediate circumstances in which we live, so as to practice some virtue more perfectly, and to eradicate some source of sin within us.

The conclusion to the meditation consists in the making of a thanksgiving, itself one of the component parts of prayer, and the petition that we should be successful in carrying out the resolution we have made. The memory is brought to the assistance of the other faculties by the recollection of some pious statement pertinent to the matter of the resolution or the meditation as a whole.

✠ K. The method of St. Ignatius, which is fully as common as the other in the United States, is equally expressive of the place this exercise occupies in the petition of prayer. The great spiritual theologian, Le Gaudier, has described this method with outstanding success.<sup>6</sup> Le Gaudier has the happy faculty of presenting the teaching of St. Ignatius in all of its theological nicety and profundity. According to his teaching, meditation is something which is meant to lead to three distinct effects, prudence, or a practical judgment of the intelligence with reference to the practice of some particular virtue or the eradication of some particular source of sin or imperfection, the deliberate choice, or the act of the will consequent upon this judgment, and finally a colloquy or petition in which this benefit is asked of God.

The prelude to the Ignatian method of meditation consists in the three acts of preparation. First of all, the intelligence fixes its attention on the point of the meditation. Then it calls the imagination and the memory to its assistance, in what is called the composition of place.

In this exercise the memory or the imagination is focused upon some point pertinent to the consideration of the intelligence, in order that it may add to rather than distract from the business of the meditation proper. Finally there is a petition for the success of the operation as such.

The meditation itself is made up of three acts, those of the memory, the intelligence, and the will. Le Gaudier reminds us that by the memory, St. Ignatius meant the first and the second operations of the intellect itself. The mind sets itself to the task of clarifying its ideas, and stating the principle of faith upon which it is to meditate. This consideration is to be both supernatural and practical. This meditation is almost always concerned with the mysteries of the humanity of Christ. From this consideration comes the act of the reason itself, the application of this truth to our own lives, manifest in a detailed examination of our own duties. It is imperative, for the success of this meditation, that this examination should be made in the light of the consideration made in the first part of the exercise, that is because of the perfection of our Lord Himself. The will enters in and puts these decisions into practice, utilizing the acts of all the other human faculties in the achievement of its end.

Utilizing either of these two methods, as they are taught and explained by the masters of the spiritual life, meditation will be both supernatural and practical. It will be based upon the truths which God has revealed to us through our Lord, and which He proposes to us through the Catholic Church. It will be practical in the sense that it will affect our actions, motivating and directing them to the end of prayer itself, perfection of the spiritual life. Meditation of this sort is incumbent upon all who are called upon to live the life of perfection.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE DEGREES OF MENTAL PRAYER<sup>1</sup>

A. Mental prayer can grow in perfection as the soul advances in the supernatural life.

B. The first stage of advance beyond the grade of methodical meditation is affective prayer.

C. In the prayer of acquired recollection or acquired contemplation the discursive acts are reduced to a minimum.

D. These first three stages are all in the line of the natural procedure of the human intelligence.

E. Infused contemplation is a kind of awareness which God gives to the soul, and which could not be the resultant of any activity performed according to the natural mode of human procedure.

F. This infused contemplation is something essentially distinct from the charisms.

G. Ordinarily the soul is favored with two degrees of this prayer during what is called the illuminative way.

H. Three degrees of this infused prayer are commonly recognized as pertaining to the unitive way.

I. Infused contemplation is an activity of which the gifts of the Holy Ghost are the proximate principles within us.

J. This infused contemplation can be called passive.

K. All mental prayer is a part of the essential petition.



✂ A. Meditation is one form of mental prayer. In the practice of meditation the soul can acquire that practical consideration of God in the order of prayer which is meant to be an integral part of the petition of fitting things from God. But, in the order of divine providence, there can be, and as a matter of fact there are, forms of



mental prayer higher than meditation. The life of habitual grace in this world is meant to be dynamic. It is something which is ordered for growth. The growth in the spiritual life is one of intensity. The soul becomes more perfect insofar as its charity is more intense and more perfectly effective.

But charity is the source of prayer. And, as the charity increases, ordinarily the manner of prayer itself changes. This increase in the spiritual life follows ordinarily along certain well-defined lines. There is a phase of the spiritual life which is proper to beginners, another which is that of the proficient, and finally one which belongs to those who have reached a stage of relative perfection and who are proximately disposed to enter the presence of God in heaven. The distinction of these phases of the spiritual life has a tremendous practical importance in the government of souls. Each has its proper preoccupations, and each has its own manner of mental prayer.

The fact that there can be, and actually are, degrees of mental prayer can be understood best when we recall that mental prayer consists in the acquisition of this practical consideration of God. That consideration is acquired in the manner in which man achieves any other sort of important knowledge, by the use of reasoning. In reasoning the soul passes from one truth to the other, considers certain principles and draws out the conclusions which are latent in those principles. But all of this activity, and all the use which is made of the imagination and the other sense faculties is ordered to the acquisition of this conclusion, in which the content of the principle is expressed.

✠ B. Even in purely human procedure, there comes a time when a man does not need to go through all of the

processes of reasoning in order to possess this knowledge. When, for instance, a man begins to learn to drive an automobile there are several factors which he must keep in mind, and very definitely he must pass from the consideration of one truth or fact to that of another. But, if he perseveres, and if he has performed this detailed program properly, a time will come when he will look upon the driving of the car as one operation, and will no longer have to make all of these explicit and distinct acts which he made in the beginning. But obviously his grasp of this particular problem is better when he no longer has to make all of the explicit and distinct acts he made at first. Another illustration might be taken from the procedure of any science. The man who begins to learn any science must take every step separately and distinctly. The man who has progressed in this same science has the same object without having to refer to each distinct step in the proof.

In the line of mental prayer, there is a stage in which the man who has utilized the procedure of meditation properly no longer has to refer distinctly to each individual step in the methodical meditation. Mental prayer of this sort is known as affective prayer. The reason for the name is found in the eminently practical character of meditation itself. The consideration which is to be obtained in mental prayer is practical in character, therefore of a nature to influence and cause the activity of the will. In affective prayer this activity of the will comes without the necessity of recurring to each step in the discursive meditation, because of a certain acquired con-naturality of the man meditating with the subject of meditation or mental prayer itself.

✠ C. In affective prayer, properly so called, there is still

some recognizable discursive activity. But, as a man progresses more and more, and becomes more perfectly adept at the work of prayer, this discursive activity is no longer recognizable as such. The subject possesses a practical consideration of God in the order of prayer, of the sort that would have come from the exercise of a methodical and discursive meditation, but he has that consideration without any necessity of passing from one truth to another by any properly discursive act. This type of mental prayer is called acquired contemplation or sometimes the acquired prayer of recollection.

✠ D. Now it is important to note that the practical knowledge which constitutes this prayer of acquired recollection is something acquired by meditation properly so called. It is something enjoyed by the person who has placed all of his faculties at the disposition of prayer. It would be at least useless to attempt to introduce a man to the prayer of acquired recollection, or for that matter to the affective prayer, without first seeking to initiate him into the practice of meditation, properly so called. In the same way it would be disastrous to attempt to teach a man to drive a car by telling him to start in the manner of one already accustomed to this work, considering the driving of the car merely as one act.

These three types or degrees of mental prayer are within the power of man at any time. They are performed according to the natural manner of procedure of the human mind. It is natural for man to acquire his knowledge, either speculative or practical by way of discursive procedure. It is also natural for that discursive procedure to lend itself to simplification, so that when this activity becomes more connatural to man, the number of the explicit steps involved is lessened.

✠ E. However, it is within the ordinary course of the growth of the spiritual life, and of advancement in prayer, that God should give to His servants who have been faithful to the practice of prayer a consideration of Himself according to a different and supernatural manner. It is imperative, for the understanding of the theology of prayer, that we should not lose sight of the fact that all mental prayer, whether of meditation or of infused contemplation, is supernatural in its object. That is the point which theologians like Le Gaudier stress so insistently. What is considered in mental prayer is always a supernatural reality, and, since the essence of any knowledge is dependent upon its object, mental prayer is always something essentially supernatural. But this second type of mental prayer is not only a consideration of a reality which man could never know without a help from God which is in no way due to the nature of man. It is a consideration which man possesses in a manner which is essentially superior to the natural manner in which man acquires knowledge through the natural exercise of his faculties.

In general this higher form of mental prayer is a kind of intuitive awareness of God as present to the human soul, an awareness in faith. The presence of God is experienced in and through the belief by which we accept as true those propositions which He has given to us, and accept them on His authority. It is a practical awareness, integrated into the life of prayer itself and destined to move the soul to intense and perfect acts of virtue. But because it is something supernatural in its manner, something which God gives when and as He pleases, it is an exercise which man is definitely not able to produce when he wishes. This infused contemplation is in no wise



necessary for salvation. God does not have to grant it to anyone, even to a man who has been most faithful in the practice of discursive mental prayer. It is not absolutely requisite for even high sanctity. But it is called ordinary, in the sense that the granting of infused contemplation by God to a soul is not something outside of the direction of progress in the life of grace itself.

✠ F. In this way, of course, infused contemplation is distinguished from certain other spiritual gifts which are definitely outside the normal direction of the soul's advance in the life of grace. There are certain gifts called charisms, gifts which God gives to souls and which are valid in the supernatural order, but which have no connection with the progress of the soul that receives them. Such charisms are private revelations, visions, and all of those other manifestations which are ordered to the edification of the Christian body as a group rather than geared to the progress of the soul of the person who is favored with them. In other words while infused contemplation properly so called is something which God grants only to those souls who have advanced to a certain stage of perfection in the life of grace, these charisms are themselves indifferent. They can, of themselves, be possessed and enjoyed by persons not far along the road to perfection. In the traditional teaching of spiritual theology the various degrees of infused contemplation are shown to belong to definite phases of the spiritual life. They coincide with and fit into the preoccupations which are meant to be the pre-eminent concern of persons who have reached these definite stages on the way to Christian perfection. The charisms in themselves have no such aptitude. A man never can and never will reach any stage of perfection which has any special place for these char-



isms, or with the nature of which the charisms are connected intrinsically.

¶ G. We have spoken of degrees in this infused or supernatural contemplation, of this contemplation which is called passive, not because the soul does not act in it, but because it is produced outside the natural mode of activity of the human mind. These degrees are distinguished one from the other according to the completeness with which this consideration takes possession of the mind and of the being of the person to whom God grants it.

The beginning, or the first phase of the mental prayer of infused contemplation, is found in the prayer of supernatural recollection. Here the soul is absorbed in the consideration of God and finds itself immersed in that consideration more profoundly than it could ever be as a result of natural effort. The sense activities are painfully purified by God Himself so that they will not in any way distract from the purity of this consideration. The next stage is the prayer of quiet, in which this consideration becomes more perfectly tranquil, in such a way that the tranquillity or suavity becomes its characteristic feature. These two stages are allocated in that part of the spiritual life which is called the *via illuminativa*, the period in the progress in the life of grace in which the central preoccupation of the soul is meant to be a more perfect performance of the works of the Christian virtues.

¶ H. Three other degrees of infused contemplation are generally recognized by the theologians. The first of these is the prayer of simple union. In this consideration the soul experiences its union with God, a union of inchoate possession and enjoyment. The second is the stage of complete union, in which this possession of God in prayer comes to influence the entire activity of man. The

third is the prayer of transforming union. Here the man is so influenced and affected by this consideration which God has given to him as to be proximately disposed for entrance into the presence of God in heaven. Thus it is ordered to be the crowning favor which God accords to the soul in this life.

These three degrees of infused or passive contemplation belong to the soul which is in the highest stage of the spiritual life, the *via unitiva*.<sup>2</sup> This is the stage in which the central preoccupation of the soul is union with God. In entering upon this stage the soul ordinarily passes through what is known as the dark night of the soul, in which the spiritual faculties themselves are purified by God, and in which the soul experiences an indescribable suffering. The intimacy of the infused contemplation is of its very nature adapted to the life of the soul in this part of the Christian life. The contemplation is an awareness of God which is proportioned to the charity of one who is proximately disposed to pass to the eternal life of heaven.

✠ I. The soul enjoys this infused contemplation by reason of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These supernatural habits are inseparable from habitual grace. They are always infused with it. But they are the sources of acts which are themselves supernatural in mode. They are the principles within us of that activity which is performed under the influence of God Himself, and in a manner which is distinct from and superior to the natural mode of human procedure. They are the habits which render us well disposed for the docile reception of the divine movement which influences us to perform this activity which is supernatural, not merely in its essence, but in the manner in which it is performed. Every soul in the

state of grace enjoys these seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, but only in those souls that are advanced along the line of perfection is there a predominance of activity which proceeds from the gifts. There are seven of these gifts. Each one of them gives the soul a kind of awareness of God in line with the petition of prayer. This awareness is, of course, something absolutely superior to any consideration which the soul might obtain by the natural process of reasoning. It is something granted by God Himself, and the function of the gift is to render the soul so disposed as to be docile and prepared to receive this movement from God. The consideration might be in the practical order, as in the case of the gift of knowledge, or it might be an intuition which centered upon an awareness of all things in their Cause, as in the gift of wisdom. In any event it is an awareness which is grounded in faith and inseparable from charity. The action of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is something ordered to the furtherance of that charity in which the formal perfection of the spiritual life consists.

✠ J. This infused contemplation, which man possesses by way of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is sometimes called passive. When we speak of the condition of that soul that enjoys infused contemplation as a passive state, we do not mean to imply that the soul itself does not act in the awareness of contemplation. Neither do we infer in any way whatsoever that this contemplation is not the act of the soul. The passivity is in the mode in which this contemplation is possessed. Man comes to have this contemplation because God gives it to him apart from the process through which he must pass to gain the knowledge which he possesses in the natural or human manner. As a matter of fact, far from being merely pas-

sive, the soul in the state of contemplation is most perfectly and fully in act. The fullness of the life of mental prayer does not consist in some sort of cessation from activity, like a Hindu nirvana, but in the most perfect and intense operation of which the human soul is capable, in an operation which is so perfect that it has to be infused by God independently of the normal human means of attaining knowledge.

✠ K. The literature of Catholic theology is rich in treatises on the degrees of mental prayer. It is not the purpose or the function of this volume to carry such teaching, except to the extent that is requisite to show that mental prayer, in all of its degrees, and in its full complexity and perfection is actually a part of the petition of fitting things from God, in which prayer itself essentially consists. There is no contemplation which God grants to man in this world which is not meant to enlighten the petition which we make to Him for the things He wishes us to have through our petitions. There is no grade of contemplation so exalted as to be independent of that order to devotion which is essential to mental prayer. The highest graces that God grants to His children are meant to be dependent upon, and in turn to contribute to the petition of fitting things from God.

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## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup> St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, Book III, Chapter 24.

<sup>2</sup> This is the traditional terminology, adopted by moral theologians generally. Among the representative modern moralists we may refer to Tanquerey, *Synopsis Theologiae Moralis et Pastoralis*, Vol. 2, ed. 7a, Tournai, 1922, No. 861 (*orationis notio et species*); Aertnys-Damen, *Theologia Moralis secundum Doctrinam S. Alfonsi de Ligorio*, Vol. 1, ed. 12a, Turin, 1932, No. 414 (*orationis notio et divisio*); Pruemmer, *Manuale Theologiae Moralis secundum Principia S. Thomae Aquinatis*, Vol. 2, ed. 4a, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1928, No. 331 (*de notione et divisione orationis*); Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis ad Mentem D. Thomae et ad Normam Iuris Novi*, Vol. 2, ed. 2a, Paris, 1935, Nos. 661 and 662; Jone, *Precis de Théologie Morale Catholique*, traduit de l'allemand par l'abbé Marcel Gautier, 7th ed., Mulhouse and Tournai, 1938, No. 157.

Among the great theologians who have treated of these definitions are Suarez (1548–1617), *De Religione, Tractatus Quartus (inter opera omnia)*, Vol. 14, pp. 4–437, Paris, 1859; and especially Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *Cursus Theologiae Mystico-Scholasticae, editio nova a P. Fr. Anastasio a S. Paulo exacta*, Bruges, 1924, *et seq.*, Vol. 1, pp. 89 *et seq.*, Vol. 2, pp. 41 *et seq.* Joseph a Spiritu Sancto calls the “petition of fitting things from God” the proper, metaphysical definition, or the definition of the scholastics. The “Raising of the mind to God,” on the other hand, is an improper definition, the definition of the mystics. His explanation is the one used in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 83, art. 17. Also the Commentary on the Fourth Book of Sentences of Peter Lombard, *dist.* 15, q. 4, art. 3; Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians, *cap.* 4, *lect.* 1; and on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, *cap.* 2, *lect.* 1. According to Grabman (*Thomas Aquinas, His Personality and Thought*,



New York, 1928, p. 27) the commentaries on St. Paul mentioned here were not written directly by St. Thomas himself, but were "a faithful transcription of his lectures by Reginald of Piperno." It is obvious that the doctrine that prayer, as a petition, is composed of these four integral parts was an essential component of St. Thomas' theology of prayer.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, Vol. 2, p. 43. "Prayer can be considered improperly and properly. Under the first consideration the said parts are subjective parts, for if you read or meditate, you have your mind lifted up to God. But under the second consideration they are integral parts; because since these parts, according to the Salmanticenses whom we have mentioned above, are certain acts or dispositions which ought to be present in order that the work of the virtue should be perfect; therefore the parts about which we are speaking are integral parts with reference to prayer properly considered. For, as St. Thomas teaches, petition cannot be made fittingly except when these other parts precede it. He proceeds imprudently who goes to petition God without the previous ornament of preparation, meditation and the other parts. No one will deny that this diversity is sufficient to allow these parts to receive the designation of integral and subjective." It is to be noted that Joseph a Spiritu Sancto names preparation, spiritual reading, and meditation among the integral parts of prayer as such. We have followed the procedure of Thomas a Vallgornera, who considers preparation and spiritual reading as the prolegomena to the second among the four integral parts of prayer, and teaches that meditation is the act in which this part is perfected among those who do not actually enjoy the gift of contemplation. Cf. Vallgornera, *Mystica Theologia Divi Thomae*, Turin, 1927, Vol. 1, p. 171 *et seq.*, *De Partibus Orationis*.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *loc. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 49. "You must know that when prayer is called a lifting up of the mind, not every sort of a lifting up is meant. Otherwise there would not be found an act of any virtue which would not be prayer, for all the virtues lift up the mind . . . hence all those acts which do not have reference to the service of God are outside of the category of prayer."

<sup>6</sup> For example, Num. 11:2; 1 Kings 1:10; Jer. 29:2.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Matt. 26:42, 44; Mark 14:39; Luke 22:41, 43.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 6:9 *et seq.*; Luke 11:2.

<sup>9</sup> *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 83, art. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Vallgornera, *loc. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> Vallgornera, *loc. cit.*, p. 173. This is one of the most valuable sections of Vallgornera's work.

<sup>12</sup> Monsabre brings out this aspect of mental prayer very well in his *La Prière, Philosophie et Théologie de la Prière*, Paris, 1906, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Vallgornera, *loc. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>14</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 83, art. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Vallgornera, *loc. cit.*, p. 181, gives a résumé of the texts of St. Thomas having to do with thanksgiving. Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *loc. cit.*, p. 44, shows the distinction between the act of thanksgiving which is counted among the integral parts of the petition which constitutes prayer and the virtue of gratitude. The Catechism of the Council of Trent gives thanksgiving as one of the two principal parts of prayer, the other being postulation, which in the teaching of the catechism, and in its commentary in the *Theologia Dogmatica et Moralis* by Natalis Alexander, includes the perfections of the other two parts.

<sup>16</sup> *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 83, art. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lehodey, *Les Voies de l'Oraison Mentale*, Paris, 1927, pp. 100, 101; Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life*, Tournai, 1930, pp. 334, 337; Auguste Saudreau, *Les Degrés de la Vie Spirituelle*, 5th ed., Paris, 1920, Vol. 1, pp. 112, 113; Meynard-Gerest, *Traité de la Vie Intérieure, ou Petite Somme de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique*, Paris, 1923, Vol. 1, p. 473.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Apoc. 6:13, 14.

<sup>19</sup> This statement of St. John Chrysostom on prayer is sometimes taken as a definition in the strict sense of the term. Pruemmer (*loc. cit.*) considers it as a synonym of the "raising of the mind to God." Naval compares it to the other definitions of prayer, and finds it better suited [*aptior*] to express the nature of prayer (*Theologiae Asceticae et Mysticae Cursus-versio latina a Fernandez facta*, 2nd ed., Turin, 1925, No. 49). This neglect of the traditional scholastic teaching on the nature of prayer detracts considerably from the merits of what is otherwise a competently written treatise. Similar confusion exists in the article on *prière* in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, written by Fonck, and in Bremond's *Introduction à la Philosophie de la Prière*, Paris, 1928, pp. 12, 13. St. Thomas (Commentary on the Fourth Book of Peter the Lombard, dist. 15, q. 4, art. 1, *quaestiuuncu* 1), stated that this definition, the petition of fitting things from God "stated the essence of prayer most truly."

## CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologica*, *IIa-IIae*, q. 83, art. 1. Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *loc. cit.*, pp. 66 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Compendium Theologiae*, Part 2, Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas deals with this power of prayer in *IIa-IIae*, q. 83, art. 2, Monsabre, *loc. cit.*, p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> John 16:24; cf. Matt. 7:7; and Luke 11:9.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 10:12, 13; James 4:2. This aspect of the theology of prayer has been treated masterfully by Richard, *Théologie et Piété d'après Saint Thomas*, Paris, 1936, pp. 174-182. It is dealt with in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part 4, in the chapter on the utility of prayer.

<sup>4</sup> *IIa-IIae*, q. 83, art. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation*, Saint Maximin, 1923, Chapter 4, art. 1, No. 1; Vallgornera, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>6</sup> Richard, *loc. cit.*

## CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup> *IIa-IIae*, q. 83, art. 2; Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part 4, the chapter on the necessity of prayer.

<sup>2</sup> Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, *De Dono Perseverantiae*, Chapter 39.

<sup>4</sup> Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, No. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Chapter XXI.

<sup>6</sup> The standard manuals of Christian spirituality always list prayer among the means that are absolutely requisite for advance in the life of grace. Cf. Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life*, Tournai, 1930; Sandreau, *L'Idéal de l'Âme Fervente*, Paris, 1923.

<sup>7</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, Chapter 3, art. 5, p. 225.

<sup>8</sup> *Conc. Trid. Decretum de Iustificazione*, cap. 11, Dez. 804; St. Augustine, *De Natura et Gratia*, cap. 50. The first part of the Council's declaration is taken verbatim from St. Augustine.

<sup>6</sup> *Conc. Trid. Decretum de Iustificazione*, cap. 6, Dez. 798.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 17:20.

<sup>11</sup> James 4:2.

<sup>12</sup> Ps. 105:23.

<sup>13</sup> I Thess. 5:17.

<sup>14</sup> Ecclus. 18:22.

<sup>15</sup> Merkelbach, *op. cit.*, No. 677.

#### CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup> *Compendium Theologiae*, Part II, *cap.* 2.

<sup>2</sup> This was the plan of the second part of the *Compendium Theologiae* itself.

<sup>3</sup> *Compendium Theologiae*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Denzinger, p. 1234.

<sup>5</sup> Denzinger, p. 1328.

#### CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 3; Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 80, art. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 85, art. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Cardinal Schuster, *The Sacramentary*, London, 1924, Vol. 1, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. article "The Act of the Mystical Body," in *Ecclesiastical Review*, May, 1939.

#### CHAPTER VII

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 4; Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Denzinger, p. 984.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> Sylvius, *Commentarii in Totam Secundam Secundae s. Thomae Aquinatis*, Antwerp, 1697. Sylvius explains the articles of the *Summa* in order, hence the doctrine to which we refer is contained in the commentary on the fourth article of the eighty-third question.

<sup>5</sup> Sylvius, *loc. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 4, *ad* 3, and art. 11, *ad* 3.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Sylvius, *loc. cit.*

#### CHAPTER VIII

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 5. Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *op. cit.*, pp. 169 *et seq.*

#### CHAPTER IX

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 6. The Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part 4. The things which are to be sought in prayer.

## CHAPTER X

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologica*, The Supplement, q. 71, art. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Denzinger, p. 599. Cf. Supp. q. 71, art. 13.

<sup>3</sup> From the prayer for the Jews, in the Mass of the Presanctified on Good Friday.

<sup>4</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 102.

<sup>5</sup> From a pastoral letter of October 1, 1854. Cf. *Pages Choisies du Cardinal Pie*, Paris, 1916, Vol. 2, pp. 110, 111.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 21:31, 32.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. 2:1-4.

## CHAPTER XI

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 8, also the Commentary of Sylvius on this article.

<sup>2</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 25, arts. 8 and 9.

## CHAPTER XII

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 9. The Commentary on the Third Book of Sentences of Peter the Lombard contains a magnificent explanation of the connection of the petitions of the Lord's prayer with the gifts of the Holy Ghost and with the beatitudes (*Dist.* 34, q. 1, art. 6). The body of the projected second part of the incompleted *Compendium Theologiae* was intended to be an exposition of this same prayer. Cf. Chapters 5 to 10 in the second part. There is also a special opusculum, listed as No. 34 by Father Mandonnet and as No. 7 in the Roman classification.

<sup>2</sup> Sylvius in his commentary on this article.

## CHAPTER XIII

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 10. Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Denzinger, p. 179.

## CHAPTER XIV

<sup>1</sup> *IIIa*, q. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *IIIa*, q. 21, art. 1, *ad* 1.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 26:39.

<sup>4</sup> The Sacerdotal Prayer of Christ comprises the entire seventeenth chapter in the Gospel according to St. John.

<sup>5</sup> Chapter 3.

<sup>6</sup> *IIIa*, q. 48.

## CHAPTER XV

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Explanatio in Psalmos, auctore Sancto Roberto Bellarmino*, Rome, 1931, Introductio, pp. xli and xliv.



## CHAPTER XVI

<sup>1</sup> Friethoff, *De Alma Socia Christi Mediatoris*, Rome, 1936, pp. 148, 149.

<sup>2</sup> Friethoff, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc. 5:13.

## CHAPTER XVII

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Father Theophorus, "Help from the Souls in Purgatory," in the *Ecclesiastical Review*, April, 1937, pp. 405-410. Minges, *Compendium Theologiae Dogmaticae Specialis*, ed. 2a, Regensburg, 1922, No. 703. The statement of Richard of Middleton is found in his Commentary on the Fourth Book of Sentences of Peter the Lombard, *dist.* 45, art. 7, q. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ioannis Medinae, *De Poenitentia, Restitutione et Contractibus*, Ingolstadt, 1581, Vol. 1, p. 348.

<sup>3</sup> St. Robert Bellarmine, *The Controversies, De Purgatorio*, lib. 2, cap. 15, pp. 121-124, in the Vives edition, in the third volume.

<sup>4</sup> Suarez, *De Religione*, t. 2, lib. 1, cap. 10; pp. 44 and 45 in the fourteenth volume of the *Opera Omnia Suarezii* published by Vives.

<sup>5</sup> Sylvius, *Commentary on the Summa Theologica*, The Supplement, q. 71, art. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Medina, *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> St. Robert, *loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Sylvius, *loc. cit.*, and Commentary on *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 11, obj. 3 and the response to that objection.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph a Spiritu Sancto, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

## CHAPTER XVIII

<sup>1</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 6:6.

## CHAPTER XIX

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Marcellus a Puero Jesu, *Cursus Philosophiae Scholasticae*, Bilbao, 1924, Vol. 1, p. 22, and Vol. 2, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> Marcellus a Puero Jesu, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Sylvius, *Commentary on Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ila-IIae*, q. 83, art. 13, ad 2.

## CHAPTER XX

<sup>1</sup> Sylvius, *Commentary on IIa-IIae*, q. 83, art. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 18:1.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. 5:17.

<sup>4</sup> *IIa-IIae*, q. 83, art. 14.

## CHAPTER XXI

<sup>1</sup> *IIa-IIae*, q. 82, art. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hugon, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, Paris, 1927, 5th edition. Vol. 3, pp. 626, 627.

<sup>3</sup> *IIa-IIae*, q. 83, art. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Mark 11:24.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 5:14.

## CHAPTER XXII

<sup>1</sup> Cf. article on the Theology of Meditation in the March and the April numbers of the *Ecclesiastical Review*, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> The Letter *Haerent Animo*, August 4, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> Vallgornera, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup> Vallgornera, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>5</sup> Tanquerey, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-339.

<sup>6</sup> Le Gaudier, *De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, Turin, 1934, Vol. 2, pp. 127-166.

## CHAPTER XXIII

<sup>1</sup> The various stages of mental prayer spoken of in this chapter are more adequately described in the book of Lehodey, *Les Voies de l'Oraison Mentale*, 9th ed., Paris, 1927. The order and the terminology in this chapter follow the teaching of Garrigou-Lagrange in his *Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation*.

<sup>2</sup> Many spiritual writers prefer to speak of these three ways as conditions of the active rather than of the passive state.

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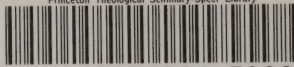
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